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SPIRITUAL TALKS

(By the first disciples of Sri Ramakrishna)



ADVAITA ASHRAMA

MAYAVATI, ALMORA, HIMALAYAS

Published by
SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA
ADVAITA ASHRAMA
MAYABATI, ALMORA, HIMALAYAS

Printed by
N Mukherjee, B A
ART PRESS
20, British Indian Street
Calcutta, India

PREFACE

The disciples of Sri Ramakrishna are today well known all over India and even abroad especially the few whose conversations we have included in this book. They are the builders of the Ramakrishna Mission which was founded by Swami Vivekananda the chief disciple of the Master. The public, however has not had the opportunity of knowing them as the loving Gurus or spiritual instructors in which capacity they were known only to the chosen few who had the rare privilege of sitting at their feet. This volume presents for the first time in book form the words addressed by these great souls to a devoted group of disciples and admirers, some of whom preserved them for their private use. These records derive their value from the simplicity and directness with which they touch upon and illuminate many aspects of practical religion. If they have helped a few, they can help others also. It is with this belief that we send out this volume to the world. In doing so we express our deep indebtedness to all those who have

kindly allowed us to use their diaries, which alone has made this undertaking possible

PUBLISHER

ADVAITA ASHRAMA
MAYAVATI, HIMALAYAS
May 15, 1936

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SPIRITUAL TALKS
BY THE HOLY MOTHER



The Holy Mother

SPIRITUAL TALKS

By The Holy Mother

I

I asked the Mother, "Mother, how shall I live my life?"

She replied, "As you are doing now Ever pray to Him yearningly in constant recollection and contemplation of Him."

"Mother, I am frightened at the sight of even great souls—Mahâpurushas—slipping from the Ideal."

"If one lives amidst objects of enjoyment, one is naturally overcome by them. Do not cast your eyes even on a wooden representation of a woman or ever go near it."

"But, is it not true that it is God who inspires man to every action?"

"Yes, it is true. But is man conscious of it? He thinks in his blind infatuation that he is the doer—he does not rely on God. Whoever surrenders himself to God is saved. A Sâdhu must be always alert. His path is very slippery, and a slippery path has to be trod with exceedingly careful steps. Is it a fun to be a Sannyâsin? He

must not even look at a woman, and when he walks the street, his eyes should be fixed on his big toes. Just as the collar of a dog saves it from being killed as a street dog, even so does the ochre-robe of a Sannyasin save him from harm. His is the royal road and every one makes way for him.

“The mind naturally tends to evil, it is disinclined to good deeds. It was my habit to rise early in the morning and meditate. But once I failed to get up so early through indisposition. Such is the natural indolence of the mind that for several days after I was late in rising. Therefore you must be up and doing if you want to achieve anything good and great. When during my stay in the *nahavat*¹ at Dakshineswar, I would see the silver moon reflected in the calm waters of the Ganges, I would tearfully pray to God. ‘O Lord, even in the moon there are stains. May my mind be absolutely spotless!’

“You were a Calcutta boy, you could easily live a comfortable married life. But you have given up everything. Why should your mind revert to such thoughts?”

¹ A room intended for the temple music. The Holy Mother used to occupy it while staying in the Temple.

"Mother, is the practice of Pranâyama and Asana¹ beneficial?"

"The practice of them brings one occult powers and occult powers lead one astray."

"Should a Sâdhu travel to holy places?"

"Why should he, if he feels calm and peaceful in one fixed place?"

"I scarcely have concentration of mind
Graciously awaken my Kundalinî."

"Rest assured She will wake up. A little of Japa and meditation will rouse Her. Of course She will not awake of Herself. You must practise Sâdhanâ. Practise meditation and by and by your mind will be so calm and fixed that you will find it hard to keep away from meditation. But meditation should not be forcibly practised. On the day when you find it hard to meditate, end by making your salutations to the Lord. On other days, meditation will come smooth and easy."

"How is it I cannot calm and concentrate my mind? I find it ruffled by various thoughts during meditation."

"Of course it is bad if the mind thinks of money, wife or children. But the thought

¹ Particular postures or modes of sitting

Kundalinî = 'coiled-up'. The dormant spiritual power is so called

of one's work is natural. If you cannot meditate, repeat the Name Japât Sîdahîh—'Realization will come through the repetition of the Name' Yes, Japa will eventually bring spiritual realization. It is good if you can meditate, but you need not do it forcibly."

"Mother, shall I practise Sâdhanâ living in the Benares Math, or retire for the purpose to a solitary place? Which is better?"

"Practise Sâdhanâ for some time in some solitary place like Hrishikesh. This will so strengthen your mind that in whatever place or company you may keep it afterwards, it will remain unaffected. A small plant has to be hedged round against cows or goats. A grown-up plant has no fear from them. Whenever you feel your mind stirred by undesirable thoughts and yet desiring knowledge, pray to Him earnestly—He will purify your mind and solve your doubts."

II

Mother "Never fear, He is ever looking after you. Do His work and practise Sâdhanâ. A little work daily drives away idle thoughts from the mind. A solitary and inactive life is liable to be troubled with idle thinking."

"Where and how shall I practise Sadhanâ ?"

"Benares is the place for you. Sadhana means concentrating the mind on God and plunging it deeper and deeper in His thought. Repeat His Name."

"Is it any use merely repeating His name, if I do not love Him ?"

"If you fall into water whether willingly or unwillingly your cloth will get wet all the same. Constantly practise meditation. Your mind is unripe—unsteady—now. But constant meditation will make it steady and calm. And always discriminate. Whenever the mind goes after anything other than God consider it as transient and surrender the mind at the sacred feet of the Lord. Be like the man who, while angling for fish became so absorbed in it that he did not hear the least of the din and bustle of a marriage procession passing by."

"What is the aim of life ?"

"To realize God and to be absorbed uninterruptedly in His consciousness, is the aim."

"Mother, should I continue the practice of Prânâyâma which I had begun ?"

"Yes, you may practise a little, but not much, for it may heat the brain. But if the

mind becomes calm of itself, what is the use of Prânâyâma ?”

“But, Mother, nothing is accomplished till the Kundalini is awakened ”

“Surely the Kundalini will wake up Go on repeating His name, everything will come out all right You may repeat His name a million times even though the mind is unsteady You will hear the Anâhata Dhvani¹ before the Kundalini awakes But everything depends on the grace of the Divine Mother The other day during the small hours of the morning, I had a vision of a Sivalinga—of Viswanâtha ”²

“But, Mother, these stone symbols of Siva no longer satisfy us ”

“Nay, my son, these are true Many great sinners who visit Benares are redeemed of their sins by touching the symbol of Viswanâtha He is graciously accepting everybody's sin On Saturdays and Sundays all sorts of people come and salute me, touching my feet This makes my feet burn ’

There was a devotee who used to visit the Monastery and the Holy Mother very

¹ The supernatural sound *Om*, perceivable in the superconscious state

² The Holy Mother was then staying at Benares

regularly. But he suddenly stopped visiting. The change seemed mysterious. I asked Mother the reason of it. She said, "It is due to his past Karma. It has overwhelmed him at last." "But," said I, "if everything is according to the will of God, why then does He not destroy his Karma?" "Yes," she rejoined, "He can destroy it if He wills. But then just see how even the Master had to suffer the consequence of his action. His elder brother (Râmkumâr) suffering from high malignant fever was drinking water. Fearing that water would aggravate the illness, the Master snatched the glass away from his hand. This displeased his brother very much. He said, 'Just as you have refused me water now, so shall you be unable to eat anything in your last days.' The Master said, 'I did it for your good. Why did you curse me?' His brother began to cry and replied, 'I do not know why this curse came out of my lips.' This was however fulfilled. The Master had to suffer for his Karma. During his last illness, he could scarcely take anything." "

"Should I count when I do my Japa¹?"

¹ Repetition of God's name

“No, do it without counting, for counting often diverts the attention from the Japa ”

“How is it that Japa does not lead me deep into God-absorption ?”

“It will, by and by But do not give up Japa even if the mind is unwilling and unsteady You must go on with the repetition And you will find that the mind is getting gradually steadier—like a flame in calm air Any movement in the air disturbs the steady burning of the flame, even so the presence of any thought or desire makes the mind unsteady The Mantra must be correctly repeated An incorrect utterance delays progress A woman had for a part of her Mantra the word Rukmini-nâthâya But she would repeat it as Ruku This impeded her progress But she got the correct Mantra afterwards through His grace ”

III

I had the privilege of seeing the Holy Mother for the first time in 1907 During the rainy season of the next year I went to visit her for the second time I reached Jayrâmbâtî¹ where she was living at that time, at

¹ The Mother's native village in the Bankura district of Bengal

THE HOLLY MOTTER

10-30 in the morning. After I had paid my devoted obeisance at her feet she asked me 'Are you a pupil of M—'

'No Mother,' I replied, 'but I intend to go to him.'

'Is he well? Did you meet him lately?'

'Yes he is well. I saw him some eight days back.'

When I was taking my night meal, the Mother enquired if I was staying at home.

'Yes, Mother, I am,' I said in reply. 'I had recently passed through a catastrophe—I had been seriously ill. And then came marriage.'

Motter 'Are you married already?'

Myself 'Yes Mother.'

Mother 'How old is the bride?'

Myself 'About thirteen years.'

Mother 'Whatever has happened is for your good. It is no use worrying now.'

Myself 'M— had forbidden me to marry.'

Mother 'Ah! has he not himself suffered much in the householder's life!—that is why he dissuaded you.'

Myself 'The householder's life is full of troubles. One loses one's manhood in that life.'

Mother "Quite true It is full of the clamours for money "

Myself "And also of suffering "

Mother "But the Master has also his householder devotees Do not be cast down "

I remained silent

Mother "My brothers also are married "

Myself "Did you permit them to marry ?"

Mother "What else could I do? The Master used to say that worms which live and thrive in dirt will die if they are kept in a rice pot And the nieces nowadays do not serve their uncles as carefully as we did in our days "

Myself "Everything is changing with the passage of time "

Mother "For instance, formerly I could not kill even an ant, but now I sometimes give a blow even to a cat The Master said, 'Do this and also that ' He would say 'Thou,' 'Thou ' After long and great suffering, man learns to say, 'Thou,' 'Thou ' "

"Do not fear What if you are married? She also will prove spiritual through the

i.e., man learns complete self-surrender to God

Master's will. Maybe she has acquired merits in her former birth. The Master used to say, 'Avidya is more powerful than Vidya. That is to say, Avidyâ has infatuated the whole world.'

IV

In the morning of the 20th April 1919 at about 10 o'clock, two Brahmachârinis M & S and N (a gentleman from Madras) went to see the Mother at the Jagadambâ Asrama at Koalpara in the Bankura district (Bengal), where she had been staying for the last one month. There are two Asramas at Koalpara, one for men and another for ladies. Mother was staying at the latter.

Mother's grandson—son of her niece, Maku,—was seriously ill of diphtheria at Javiambatî, some five miles off from Koalpara. Mother was very anxious for the child.

After they had made their obeisance, the talk began on her ailing grandson.

N "Mother, he will come round through your blessings."

Mother replied with folded palms "Through the Master's blessings."

S "He (N) has done much for Maku's son."

Mother "Yes he is a good man. He sent for medicine from Calcutta and spent money. Who would have done so much if he had not been here."

N "I am but an instrument of the Master. He is making me act like a tool in his hands."

Mother "The Master used to say 'Those who have, measure out, those who have not, take His name.'"¹

N "Is it necessary to have the formal wash before Japa?"

Mother "Yes, if you are in your house, you must do Asana and Achamana.² But when you travel, it is enough if you simply repeat His name."

N "Only His name? Not the Mantra?"

Mother "Yes, also the Mantra, of course. But then a single utterance of the Lord's name is as effective as a million repetitions of it, if you do it with a steady, concentrated mind. What is the use of repeating a million times with an absent mind?"

¹ That is those who are rich should practise charities etc.

² Asana=seating oneself. Achamana=washing mouth and other limbs. These are preliminaries of ritualistic worship consisting of some symbolical practices indicating firm sitting and steadiness and physical purification.

You must do this whole-heartedly. Then only can you deserve His grace.

N "It is said that the Lord grants man His vision if he calls on Him sincerely even for two or three days. I have been calling on Him for so many days. Why do I not see Him?"

Mother "Yes, you will see Him. The words of Siva and of the Master cannot be in vain. The Master said to Surendra 'Those who have money, give it away. Those who have not take His name.' If you cannot do even this, then surrender yourself to Him. It is enough if you only remember that you have some one—God—who is your father or mother, to look after you."

V

Disciple "Well Mother, what is the necessity of taking initiation? What if one should merely repeat 'Kâṁ' 'Kâḥ' without being initiated? Will he not realize the Divine Mother by so repeating Her name?"

Mother "Initiation is necessary. It purifies the body. By repeating the mystic syllable of the Lord, man becomes purified. There is a Paurâṇic story about this. Nârada had been to Vaikunta, the heaven where the Lord resides. At that time Nârada was not

initiated Narada left after a short talk with the Lord. When he left the place the Lord asked Lakshmi (the divine consort) to sprinkle Ganges water where Nârada was sitting and thus purify the place. Lakshmi said to her Lord, 'Why do you ask me to do this?' Nârada is a great devotee. The Lord replied, 'He may be a great devotee, but he is not yet initiated.' Unless one is initiated his body is not purified. For the purification of the mind and the body initiation by a Guru is necessary.

"The Vaishnavas after initiating one say, 'Now this mind is yours.'¹ The mind is everything. Unless the mind is purified nothing can be accomplished. 'In spite of the grace of the Guru, the Lord's devotees, and the Lord Himself, the soul went begging for want of the grace of the mind.' "

Disciple "Well, so many people receive initiation, what do they get thereby? One seems to be the same man before and after."

Mother "The Guru imparts spiritual power to the disciple through the mystic

¹ There is a pun on the word 'Mantra' pronounced in colloquial Bengali as Mantor which can be split up as (Man tor) which means in Bengali "This mind is yours i.e. it depends now on you to exert

syllable at the time of the initiation. The spiritual powers flow from the Guru to the disciple or *vica vāsa*. That is why after initiation of a disciple one gets ill, for one has to take the sins of the disciple. That is why Râkhal is reluctant to initiate people. He says that immediately after initiating people he gets ill. But if the disciple is good the Guru is benefited thereby. Some people get a sudden spiritual awakening immediately after initiation but that depends upon one's Samskâras (past tendencies)."

Disciple "Well, Mother, these visions, are they subjective or objective?"

Mother "Everybody says that they are subjective, but I have seen visions with these physical eyes. At Kamarpukur¹ I used to see a young girl with dishevelled hair and a garland of beads round her neck always keeping company with me wherever I went. It was only after I had practised severe austerities at Belur in Nilamber Babu's house that I ceased to see the vision any more.

"If the mind is pure why will not one get concentration? Why will not one see God-visions? After practising Japa for some time one will find that as soon as he sits for

¹ Sri Ramakrishna's birthplace

meditation the Mantra would rise from within, spontaneously, without any effort (Rather excited) One must repeat the Mantra at least fifteen to twenty thousand times a day, then only one will get some results One is sure to get it One must practise first before one says that one is not progressing But then one must practise Japa with a little attention People don't practise and simply say, 'Why am I not progressing spiritually?' "

"The mind gets purified after hard Tapasyâ Without regular practice nothing can be attained Both purity and impurity are in the mind When a man sees defects in others his mind first gets polluted What does he gain by finding faults in others? He hurts himself by that From my childhood I could not find faults in others That one thing I have never learnt in life Forgiveness itself is a great Tapasyâ Remember one thing If you want peace of mind then give up fault-finding If you find fault at all find out your own faults and shortcomings Learn to treat everyone as your own No one is alien to you, the whole world is yours "

Disciple "Mother, some devotees say, 'The starting of Sevâsramas, hospitals,

publication of books and magazines, keeping of accounts etc., etc. are not in keeping with a Sâdhu's ideal. Did Sri Ramakrishna ever do such things? It is a pity such works are thrust on young men who join the Order with a spirit of dispassion. If one is to do work, it must be work like Japa, meditation, ritualistic worship, etc. The other kinds of work are full of worldliness and turn one away from God."

Mother "Don't give them any hearing. If one does not work what will one be doing all through the day? Is it possible for one to meditate day and night? Sri Ramakrishna's case was different. It is because you are doing work of public utility that you are getting your daily bread. Otherwise you would have had to go begging from door to door for your food and thereby your health would have broken down. Moreover, who ever gives alms to Sâdhus nowadays as of yore? Do not pay any heed to such criticism, do as Sri Ramakrishna guides you. The Math will go on on these lines. Those who cannot accommodate themselves to this will have to leave the organization."

"Mani Mallick, on his returning from a pilgrimage, went to see the Master. The Master asked him 'Well, did you meet

Sâdhus?" He replied, 'Yes but then they ask for money.' The Master in reply said, 'Well, how much money after all did they ask of you. Probably a pice or two for smoking hemp or tobacco. That much. You want best dishes best suite of rooms, a well arranged bed, etc, etc, while he wants but a pice for smoking. Will he not have even that much. Will you people have the monopoly of all enjoyments and will he not have even a pice worth of smoke?' "

Disciple "What restrictions should one observe with respect to food?"

Mother "The Master used to advise his devotees to refrain from Shrâddha food,¹ for such food is detrimental to Bhakti. With the exception of that you can take any food after offering it to the Lord. Whatever you take offer it to the Lord first and then take it as His Prasâd. If you do that your blood will be purified and if the blood is purified your mind will get purified."

Disciple "What part of the day is suited for meditation?"

Mother "Early morning and evening i.e. when night passes into day and day into

¹ Food offered to the manes

night, these are the best hours for meditation. One should meditate regularly at fixed hours for who knows when the auspicious moment will come, when one will have a vision of the Divine. Such a moment comes suddenly without any premonition. So one should keep to the routine however much one's mind might be disturbed.

Disciple "But then there are the worries of work and the question of health. Again the mind is sometimes calm and sometimes very ruffled."

Mother "Of course, if one gets ill one can't help it, but if he is troubled too much by work on any particular day then it is enough if he just remembers the Lord and makes his salutations to Him. As regards the mind getting ruffled now and then it is quite natural, for it is within Nature and as such it has its own ebb and flow."

SPIRITUAL TALKS
BY SWAMI BRAHMANANDA



Swami Brahmananda

SPIRITUAL TALKS

By Swami Brahmananda

22nd May, 1911

Eight o'clock at night The disciple and L were sitting before Swami Branmananda at Balaram Bose's at Baghbazar in Calcutta

L said to the Swami "Maharaj, I have been thinking of asking you a question for some time Is it true that you saw some spirits in the Udbodhan Office a few days before the passing away of Swami P

Swami "Yes, I did I sometimes see spirits One day from upstairs I saw two very tall and robust figures standing near the western staircase They looked man-like but there was a weird and bizarre aspect about them They disappeared very soon, but the sight made me anxious I enquired if any one had seen there a ghost before No, they had not I saw such spirits once or twice again, and I felt that some evil was imminent I felt very sad at heart A few days after P passed away

"I saw a spirit in this house also, near the yonder stairs I felt that this presaged evil

I went away to the Math A few days after S 's wife died "

Disciple "I am told you saw a spirit also at Dacca "

Saami "Yes, in that house where we stayed On the second day of our arrival there, I saw it, looking like a Mussulman, standing at the door This made me sad, and I thought I would leave the house if I saw it again But it did not appear any more. Much singing of the Holy Names went on there That is perhaps why it fled Evil spirits cannot stand the name of God "

Disciple "It was this spirit perhaps which prompted S 's son to commit suicide There was no apparent reason for his action But the boy was feeble-minded, and probably could not stand the spirit's persuasions

"I have heard of a family in which a lady committed suicide by hanging herself from the branch of a mango tree Another lady, after that, began to gaze at the tree and one day suddenly committed suicide by hanging herself from that very tree Another girl also began to gaze at the tree in a similar way. A strict watch was kept over her She was asked why she gazed at the tree She said 'Someone from the yonder branch has been calling me to come and hang myself ' The

tree was at once cut down, and there was no further trouble "

L "Mahârâj have you seen any more of them ?"

Swami "I have seen both good and evil spirits While I was at Dakshineswar with the Master a man at the Temple fell very ill There was no one to look after him, so I nursed him for a few days One night as I was sitting near him, his suffering became intense I did not know how to mitigate his suffering So I thought that I would repeat the Lord's name for his relief After I had made Japa for some time, a kind of slumber fell upon me and I saw a vision A girl about twelve years old came and stood near me I asked her 'Will he get cured ?' She nodded and replied, 'Yes' and vanished From the very next day, the patient began to recover

"I also saw a good spirit while I was living at Brindaban The house where I lived was in a lane which was called the 'Ghost Lane' Hari Mahârâj (Swami Turiyananda) occupied the next room to mine It was my habit in those days to get up at midnight and practise Japa I would often notice the spirit of a Vaishnava standing by me telling his beads I saw him almost every night and was not

afraid One night, being very tired, I was sleeping heavily Suddenly someone gave me such a push that I was thrown off my bed, and I heard someone saying 'Get up It is already twelve Won't you make Japa' The push roused me I heard the temple-music indicating midnight play If I were not awakened in this fashion, I could not have got up at twelve that night

"I had a beautiful vision also at Benares They were singing the Râm-nâm in the main hall of the Sevâsrama The singing of the first invocations had just begun when I saw an old man enter slowly and sit by the picture of Sri Rama I had never seen him before, so I looked at him twice or thrice, and a few moments after I saw him no more I then remembered that Mahâvir (Hanumân) comes wherever the name of Râma is sung Probably it was he that came Tulsidâs also had a similar vision "

Disciple "What was that, Mahârâj?"

Sâmi "Tulsidâs used to pour water every day at the foot of a tree in which lived a spirit Highly pleased, it appeared before Tulsidâs one day and said 'I am very pleased with you Tell me what you want' He said 'I want only the vision of Râma Can you tell me how I can

get it.' It replied 'It is not for me to get you that vision. But I may give you a suggestion. There is a place in Benares where the Rāmavāna is read every day. Mahāvīr attends the reading regularly. Take refuge in him, he can help you in having the vision of Rama.' But how shall I recognize him?' He arrives first in the guise of an old Brāhmaṇa sits in a particular corner and is the last to leave.'

'Tulsidās accordingly went to the place and saw Mahāvīr come and sit as indicated by the spirit. When Mahāvīr was about to leave, Tulsidās clasped him by the feet and said 'I have recognized you. Graciously tell me where I can get the vision of Rama. After much entreaty Hanumān said 'Go to Chitrakut mountain. There you will see him.'

'Tulsidās went to Chitrakut and one night in deep forest, he heard the sound of music coming from afar. He enquired about it and was told that it was the singing of Rāmlīlā. He went and found the place and saw Rāma, Sītā and others sitting (he thought they were actors) and the singing of Rāmlīlā going on. When he came back, he told others how he had enjoyed the singing of Rāmlīlā on the mountain-top. They said 'Are you mad'

There is no habitation there It is deep wilderness How can there be Râmlîla there?" Tulsîdâs understood He had actually seen Râma !"

The Disciple bowed at the feet of the Swami and left

25th April, 1913

The disciple was able with some difficulty to meet the Swami alone at the Belur Math to ask him some personal questions He said "Maharâj, I am finding it impossible to calm the mind "

Swami "Practise a little meditation and Japa every day Never stop for a single day The mind is like a restless child, it wants to run away You must bring it back again and again and apply it to the meditation on the Lord Go on this way for two or three years, and then an inexpressible joy will fill your mind Meditation and Japa appear dry in the beginning But still you must engage the mind in the contemplation of the Deity, like swallowing a bitter medicine Slowly spiritual joy will grow in you People work so hard to pass examinations! To realize God is even easier than that Only let them call on Him with a calm cheerful heart "

Disciple "Sir, your words fill me with

hope But sometimes I feel very much cast down, and I think that all my spiritual practices must be in vain since they have brought me no higher experience '

Swami "No, no there is nothing to despair of Work must have its effect If you go on repeating His name be it wholeheartedly or half-heartedly, it must produce results Practise with diligence Practise regularly for some time—you will have peace and joy Meditation gives not only mental peace but also physical health—you will have less of disease So one must practise meditation even for physical improvement '

Disciple "Mahârâj, is it necessary to receive a Mantra from a Guru? Cannot one practise wholeheartedly according to one's spiritual mood?"

Swami "Initiation into a Mantra helps concentration of mind Otherwise your mind will change and fluctuate today you will like the Kâli-form, tomorrow the Hari-form and next day perhaps the formless aspect of God And thus your mind will not be concentrated upon one "

In the evening the Swami spoke about a lady who had established a girls' school in Calcutta She was fastidious in certain respects and did not trust anyone and was

easily irritable. No servant stayed with her long and the few men who had been assisting her were leaving her one by one. The Swami said: "This is nothing but a mania. If one wants to do every thing oneself, one loses one's entire energy in trifling details and cannot maintain a cool head in the essentials. Karma Yoga is very difficult. One must have a cool brain, and very much of renunciation and dispassionateness. Otherwise work drags one down. One becomes truly entitled to work only after God-realization. It is very difficult to work with women. They somehow want to dominate over you."

30th April

It was afternoon at the Belur Monastery. The disciple asked the Swami: "Mahârâj, I have been asked to repeat the name of the Lord and meditate on Him at the same time. But I cannot meditate at all. And this often makes me extremely dejected. I have found that I can meditate in three different ways: first, I can concentrate my mind on some particular part of the object of meditation—on His feet, eyes, or face, secondly, I can concentrate on Him part by part, from His feet to head and head to feet, and repeat the process several times, and

trudly I can simply meditate on the whole of Him as sitting on the lotus of my heart. As regards the third process, I admit that I cannot visualize His image clearly, but only shoud be. Nevertheless the feeling that He is sitting in my heart gives me great joy. Kindly tell me which is the most effective among these three processes.

Sri Ramana: "It is better you put these questions to your Guru. It may be my answers will not be identical with hers. She will soon come to Calcutta. It is natural that you feel depressed now and then. I also once felt like that while I was at Dakshinneswar. I was very young then, and the Master was about fifty years old. Naturally I could not always speak out all I felt to him. One day I was meditating in the Kâli temple. I could not concentrate my mind. This made me very sad. I said to myself, 'I have been living here so long, yet I have achieved little. What shall I be doing here then?' Very well, I shall not tell anything to the Master. I shall wait two or three days more. If I find that my condition has not changed by then, I shall return home. There I shall have many things with which to occupy my mind.' So I thought and returned to the Master's room. The Master was then

walking in the verandah. On seeing me he entered his room. It was our custom to salute him after returning from the Kâli temple and then take a spare breakfast. Accordingly I saluted him. But as I stood up he said, 'As you returned from the shrine, I found that your mind was as it were enmeshed.' I understood that he knew all. So I said, 'You know everything. Yes, my mind has become really like that.' He then wrote something on my tongue. And at once all my previous feelings vanished from my mind and I was overwhelmed with an inexpressible joy.

"So long as I lived with him, I used to have spontaneous recollection and contemplation of God. An ecstatic joy used to fill me always. That is why one requires a powerful Guru—one who has realized God. The Guru and disciple should test each other for a long time before the Guru initiates the disciple. Otherwise there may be regrets afterwards. For this is no passing relationship.

"If any one wants to be my disciple, I at first send him away. If he persists, I give him a Holy Name and ask him to repeat that Name one thousand times every day for one year. I have found that many are frightened away even by this prescription. One

has to work hard in initiating a disciple. First of all one must find out the real Mantra and Ishta of the disciple,¹ and that is a hard task. One day, a man came to be initiated by me. I thought that if I could know his Ishta in meditation, I would initiate him, otherwise not. So I sat in meditation. After an hour's meditation an image arose in my mind. The disciple afterwards said that that indeed was the Divine form he liked best. Nowadays most men do not do anything after initiation. It is not good to initiate one and all indiscriminately.

“Go on practising hard. At first spiritual practice appears to be drudgery—like learning the alphabet. By and by you will have peace. For two or three years I do not listen, if any one complains that he has not attained anything by initiation. After that he himself acknowledges that he is progressing. There is nothing to be worried about. Practise for two or three years. Then you will see for yourself.”

¹ The psychic and psychological development of a man makes the worship of a particular aspect of the Divinity most suitable for his spiritual growth. God in that aspect is his Ishta. Every such aspect has a corresponding mystic formula. That is the Mantra.

4th May

The Swami was speaking with several monks and devotees at the Belur Math. K. a lawyer, asked the Swami several questions relating to his Sâdhana. The Swami said in reply

“It is no use hurrying oneself. Until the right time comes, it is of little avail. The condition of mind before the favourable time arrives, is really painful. The mind is swept alternately by hope and despair, smiles and tears. But if you can secure an efficient spiritual guide, he may, by means of certain spiritual processes, push your mind above this level. You may not, however, be able to stand it, if you are pushed up untimely and too high, for example, take the case of Mathur Babu. Oh, what superhuman powers did he (the Master) not possess! At that time we thought that it was merely a peculiar power with him, but could never conceive the nature of it. Now we feel what a wonderful power that was. One day I said to him ‘Sir, I cannot get rid of lust. What shall I do?’ He touched me in the region of the heart, muttering certain indistinct words. All lust vanished from me for ever! I have never

felt its existence since then Do you see the wonder of it -

Pāṇaśāstra and other Yogic practices are not suitable to the present times and conditions One must observe complete Brahmacharya in order to practise them One's food must be absolutely pure, Sattvika and one must be guided by an expert teacher Meditation, Dhyana is at first nothing but struggling with the mind, bringing it again and again from its flights to the sacred feet of the Lord This very soon heats the brain Therefore, in the beginning one must not exert the brain too much, or hold the breath too long When one gets real meditation, one can easily continue for three or four hours, then one will feel extremely refreshed in body and mind after meditation as after a sound, deep sleep

"The mind is intimately related to the body If the stomach is upset, you can never have good meditation Hence it is that there are so many restrictions about food The stomach should be filled half with food and a quarter with water the other quarter being left vacant for passage of air

"Do not distress the mind by thinking of sins For however great a sin might be, it is great only in the eyes of men and not of God His one glance can scatter off the sins of

millions of births But of course there is the effect of Karma If you do any wrong action, you must suffer from disquiet of mind and other consequences

“The spiritual practices of the Vaishnavas are nice They contemplate on the Lîlâ of Sri Krishna from morning till night This relieves monotony But I have noticed that dressing and living like a woman, in the spirit of a lady-friend of Sri Râdhâ, often leads to a fall ”

Middle of May

After morning meditation, the Swami was sitting in his room at the Belur Math Some monks and the disciple were seated before him on the floor The Swami said “Ask me whatever you want to know ”

Disciple “Mahârâj, how can one be devoted to the Lord ””

Swami “By association with devotees You must observe their ways and follow the same in your life You must put questions to them and get your doubts solved Merely listening to what they say of their own accord will not do You must practise continence (Brahmacharya) and Sâdhanâ, otherwise spiritual instructions will not fructify in your life Merely by reading the

scriptures, you cannot grasp their true meaning. Read *Sri Sri Râmakrishna Katha* (The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna) and similar other books and try to understand their meaning. The more you will read, the newer and deeper will be the import you will discover in them. The Sâdhaka (aspirant) understands one way by hearing of God from others, but differently by practising Sadhanâ and still more differently by realizing God. Nâg Mâhâsâya (Durga Charan Nag, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna) said beautifully, 'What is the use of rowing if the boat is anchored?' This rare human birth is useless if you do not try to realize the Lord. Sankara says that the human birth, the desire for liberation and the shelter of a sage—these three only a very fortunate few have. There was another saying of Nâg Mâhâsâya. It is easy to attain fame, but very difficult to give it up. He who can renounce it is a real Sâdhu."

A Devotee "How can one conquer lust?"

Swami "By repeating His name and by contemplating on Him. Do you understand?"

Devotee "But I cannot conquer it in any way."

Swami "Then marry. Always reason

Others accomplish many things, why not you? You must Call on Him in whatever ways you like—meditate on Him, repeat His name, or sing His praise Do not doubt, do not lose self-confidence ”

Disciple “The Master used to say that one should go into solitude or to a quiet corner and cry unto the Lord Which should we emphasize—going into solitude or associating with the devotees ?”

Suami “If you meditate in solitude, the mind will easily go inwards, it will be less disturbed by foreign thoughts But you must always and everywhere associate with the devotees Until you have advanced a little, you cannot live in perfect solitude Many have gone mad by seeking absolute solitude prematurely As I said the other day, one cannot be in complete solitude until the mind is lost in Samâdhi and God One benefit of the society of Sâdhus is that you can observe their character You cannot be as impressed by reading books as by observing Sâdhus Adhar Ch Sen (a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna) often used to come to the Master in company with a school sub-inspector The latter gentleman often used to have a kind of trance One day shortly after they had arrived, the Master

went into Samâdhi. His face was lit up with a divine smile, as if he could not contain the great joy within him. On seeing this Adhar Babu said to his companion, 'By seeing your trance, I conceived a disgust for it—it seemed to suggest a great suffering within you. Can the Divine ecstasy ever cause pain?' The blissful ecstasy of the Master has opened my eyes. I would have found it impossible to come here any more, if his trance also had been like yours.'

"A man once visited Trilinga Swami. While returning, he thought that since the Swami did not speak, it was no use going to him. Nevertheless he paid him another visit and sat near him. The Swami suddenly began to cry piteously. Then suddenly again he began to laugh ecstatically. On seeing this, the man thought, 'Oh, what I have learnt today I could not have gathered even from a thousand books. When I shall be as restless for God as when the Swami cried, I shall see Him. And when He will shower His grace on me, I shall enjoy as much bliss as the Swami did when he laughed.'"

A Devotee "The other day you said that it was no use hurrying oneself, that one must wait for the proper hour. Should we then give up yearning for the Lord?"

Suami "I may have said so in another connection. What I meant by 'hurrying oneself' was a temporary fit of restlessness, crying and other outward manifestations. Such fits pass off in a few days, and then the man is lost in despair and lethargy and gives up all search for God. As for instance the case of G. Once he practised much Sâdhanâ. But now he has conceived the idea of studying Sanskrit grammar and becoming a scholar. Perhaps he wants to have fame by talking learned things."

Disciple "The Master used to say that if we dig a well at different places, we cannot get water."

Suami "Yes, it is so. One must stick on. If the restlessness is due to real love for God, even if one does not realize God, one cannot forget Him. Even if he does not see God for millions of lives, he will still steadily call on Him. Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) has said, 'A little awakening of the Kundalini is dangerous.' Unless the Kundalini rises to the higher planes, lust, anger, and other low passions become very powerful. That is why the Vaishnava Sâdhanâs as a lover or friend are dangerous. Constantly dwelling on the love-relations between Sri Krishna and Sri Râdhâ, they cannot control their lust and

are degraded. I know of one who practised this way for a long time, but afterwards married a bad woman. One, therefore, should not in the beginning study books on Sri Krishna's love-relations with the Gopis.

"Is it easy to meditate? If you happen to eat a little too much, you cannot concentrate your mind. Meditation is possible, if you can keep lust, anger, and all other passions under control. If any of them grows strong, you cannot have meditation. It is easy to buy two pice worth of cow-dung cakes and ignite and sit within them¹. But real Tapasyâ is to restrain the passions and not give vent to them. This indeed is the highest Tapasyâ. Do not be cast down if bad thoughts occasionally arise in your mind. Brush them aside."

27th May

The disciple was listening to the Swami at the Belur Math. The Swami said:

"Oh, how deep was the Master's devotion to truth! If he happened to say that he

¹ This is a kind of austerity called Panchatapâ. Four fires are burnt in four corners—sometimes a complete circle of fire is also made—and one sits in the centre meditating or repeating Mantras, while the sun burns overhead. Thus passes the whole day. This practice is sometimes continued for days together.

would not eat any more, he could not, even if he was hungry. Once he said that he would go to Jadu Mallik's, but afterwards forgot about it. I also did not remind him. At night after supper he remembered the appointment. It was then quite late in the night, but he must go. I accompanied him with a lantern in hand. When we reached the house, we found it closed and all asleep. The Master then pushed back the doors of the parlour a little and placed his foot once inside the room and came away.

"He could see the inside of a man by merely looking at his face as though he was looking through a glass pane. Whenever a visitor came he would look him over from head to foot, and he would understand all. And then he would answer his questions.

"Even great saints sometimes cannot give up egoism. Even Bhaskarananda Swami (of Benares) showed me his photograph and said 'See, my picture is being sold!' But the Master! When Keshab Sen wrote about him in his paper, he forbade him.

"One day the son of a public woman came to Dakshineswar. The Master was sleeping in his room. The man entered and touched his feet. The Master at once started up, as if some one had thrown fire on him. He

said 'I will atone all the sins that you have committed. If you cannot go to the Ganges and speak them out boldly. You will be freed from them.' But the man was ill-treated, he could not.'

28th May

At night the Swami Ramlal (a nephew of Sri Ramakrishna) and a few devotees were sitting on the upper verandah of the main building of the Belur Monastery.

Ramlal "The other day T of Belgharia (a prominent householder disciple of the Master) came to Dakshineswar. He is now employed at Sealdah. He has married a second wife and has many children. He seems to be much entangled. He has lost his former beautiful appearance."

Swami "What a pure mind he had in those days! Even now he has it. The Master selected his men with great care. N possessed such a high spiritual state, but the Master said 'If that be so, why does not his cloth glide off his waist?' When he learnt that N had ten thousand rupees deposited in a bank, he remarked 'That is why it is so. He who is calculating would be lost.'"

4 Devotee "Mahârâj, it is all so very

mysterious' N and T were such advanced souls, and they were also blessed by the Master, yet they went wrong. Some believe that whoever has seen the Master is saved. Ram Babu also held that view."

Suam "His case was exceptional. He had such tremendous faith! And towards the end he renounced everything in pursuit of his spiritual mood. Others only profess faith, but they do not possess it.

"And merely seeing a great soul won't do. One must meditate and assimilate, one must have discrimination and dispassion.

"Ah, how joyfully we lived with the Master at Dakshineswar! Sometimes he would convulse us with side-splitting laughter by his witty talks. What we now cannot realize by meditation, we then attained automatically. If my mind went wrong by even a little he would understand it from my appearance, and he would pass his hand over my chest and set it right. And how free I was with him! One day I was rubbing oil on his body in the semi-circular western porch. For some reason I got angry with him. I threw away the bottle of oil and strode off with the intention of never returning to him. I went out of the Temple and came near Jadu Mallik's garden-house. And

then I could not proceed further I sat down. Meanwhile he had sent Ramaji to call me back. When I came he said "Did you see?" Could you go?"

"Once I did a wrong thing and became extremely penitent. I went to confess it to him. He asked me to follow him with my water-jug. While returning he said 'You did this yesterday?' Never do so any more.' I was dumb with wonder. How could he know?"

"Another day when I returned from Calcutta, he said 'Why can I not look at you?' Have you done anything wrong?" "No," I replied—I had forgotten that I had told a fib. "Did you tell any lie?" he asked me. Then I remembered I had."

1st June

It was a Sunday afternoon at the Belur Math. Many devotees were sitting before the Swami. One of them asked "Maharaj, how can one have yearning for the Lord?"

Swami "You must first purify your mind by keeping company with the Sadhus and devotees and receiving instructions from your Guru. Next you must practise hard Sâdhanâ. Only then would you feel a yearning for God. One requires a teacher

even when one wants to learn steaming. And this sublime Brahma-Vidyâ—Knowledge of Brahman—does it not require a teacher to acquire it ?”

Thus the Swami spoke for a time and then said “When you go to a Sâdhu you must ask him questions. Ask me whatever you want to know.”

Devotee “How can one have peace ?”

Swami “By loving God, and by having true faith in Him. You cannot have it at the very beginning. At first there must be great restlessness, your heart will be full of anguish at not having yet realized the Lord. But it is all right, the more thirsty you are, the better you will relish water. You must create restlessness, if there is none. When men no longer find any joy in the world, they feel restless and then they are attracted towards God.”

Devotee “How can one have love for God ?”

Swami “By trying to realize Him through singing His name and praise and praying to Him. Thus have the saints realized Him.”

Devotee “Can I not realize God, while in the world ?”

Swami “Does anyone live outside the world ?”

Devotee "I mean, while living with one's family "

Svami "Say that Yes, you can But with difficulty "

Devotee 'May one renounce the world when one feels Vairâgva -'

Svami "Yes He ought to And that indeed is true Vairâgva, this dispassionateness for all worldly things When once you have it, it never dies, on the other hand, it grows, like fire After one has once come out of the world, one never wants to go back to it "

Devotee "Can I not do without a Guru?"

Svami "I think not No, you can never do without him Who is the Guru? He who points out the path to your Ishta (Chosen Deity) by, say, giving you a fixed Name to repeat You may have many Upagurus, subsidiary teachers The real Guru will tell you which Sadhanâ to practise, and he will advise you to keep the company of devotees Formerly, it was customary for the disciple to live in the house of his Guru, so that the Guru could watch over the disciple and the disciple could serve the Guru, and if the disciple went wrong, the Guru could bring him back to the right path

Therefore, you should never make one your Guru, unless he is a knower of Brahman, or very highly advanced in spirituality ”

Devotee “But how am I to know that a person is such ?”

Suami “You will know if you live with him for some time The Guru also can then observe you If you have much hankering after the world, which it would be difficult to check, he must not initiate you, but send you back If you want to make anyone your Guru, live near him for some time and watch his ways The system of hereditary Gurus has this advantage that the Guru and the disciple both know each other’s family history well

“Practice is the means of concentrating the mind Prânâyâmâ, breath-control, is also one of the means But it is not safe for a householder—if one is not continent, one falls ill, and one must have nutritious food, a fine place, and pure air In order to have meditation and concentration, you must practise in solitude, the more you will try, the more you will achieve Wherever you find conditions favourable, say, if there is a fine scenery, sit down to meditate Seek Him, and renounce Kâmini-Kâanchana, lust and gold But first renounce internally

These are evanescent Take your mind off them

"God is with form and is also formless and He is also above form and formlessness. What does Vedanta mean by saying that Brahman is true and the world false? That the world as we see it now is false. The world vanishes in Samadhi but you feel that you are experiencing a great joy. The Rishis experienced that absolute joy. What exists in Samadhi cannot be explained. Then there is no longer 'I' or 'thou' but only Sachchidananda—Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute

"If you ask me What is the proof of God? I say that the Sâdhus have stated that they have realized God and they have also pointed out the way to His realization. The Master used to say 'Merely saying "hemp," "hemp" will not intoxicate you. You must procure hemp, prepare it and take it, and then wait a little. Only then would you feel the intoxication. Even so merely saying "God," "God" will not make you realize Him. You must practise Sadhana and then wait a little ' "

Devotee "While making Japa (repetition of the name of God), I sometimes forget to do so. Why is this?"

Swami "Patanjali has said that this is an obstruction to Yoga. To meditate is to think and become conscious of Him. When meditation will be intense, when God will actually reveal Himself, you will have Samâdhi. If you attain Samâdhi, the joy of it will persist for a long time, some say for all times.

"Sri Chaitanya sent one of his disciples to Rai Ramananda. The disciple found him rolling in luxury. But as soon as the name of the Lord was uttered, love welled forth from his heart like a fountain. It is said that unless one is a Sâdhu one cannot know a Sâdhu, just as a petty brinjal-seller cannot know the value of a diamond. If anyone realizes a high spiritual state through Sâdhanâ, he himself can know it.

"During meditation think that desires for worldly things are worthless. This will leave a good impression on the mind. As you drive away the desires from your mind, good thoughts and feelings will come up. If you see lights or hear supernatural sounds during meditation, know that you are going on rightly. But do not attach any importance to these lights and sounds, though they are good signs. While meditating in a solitary place, you may sometimes hear the sound Om.

or the ringing of bells or natural sounds from afar

“If Sankara prayed to the Divine Mother saying ‘Thou art my refuge, O Mother’ it was only as an example for the men of the world—to teach them that God can be realized through every means ’

SPIRITUAL TALKS
BY SWAMI SHIVANANDA



Swami Premananda

SPIRITUAL TALKS

By Swami Premananda

8th May, 1912

Swami Premananda, one of the foremost disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, was in charge of the Belur Monastery. The Swami was a very attractive personality and seemed almost to exhale purity and love.

After the noonday meal, he began to speak enthusiastically of Sri Ramakrishna to the assembled monks and devotees.

Swami "Seeing that the Master liked lemon much, Yogin (Swami Yogananda) used to bring him a lemon every day. One day the Master said to him, 'Wherefrom did you get the lemon yesterday?' I could not take it." Yogin knew that the Master could not take things brought from evil and impure persons. But he had brought the lemon from the same plant from which he had brought the other lemons. Why was it, then, that the Master could not take it? Yogin felt much perturbed and began to look out for the cause. After a careful enquiry he came to know that the orchard

from which he used to bring the fruits had changed hands on the day previous to the incident—the lease had expired. He received permission to get the fruits from the former lessee. On that particular day, therefore, that permission did not hold, and it was really a theft, though unconscious.

“The Master could see the very mind of the donor in the things given him. He could not take any food which was contaminated by the least sin. How wonderful was his purity! He could not tolerate the touch and approach of any impurity. Therefore, if you want to realize him, you must make your heart absolutely pure. All the passions will have to be conquered. Whoever will come here must become an ideal man. You must remember that you are his children. But do not let this make you proud. Pride must be given up once for all. Mahârâj (Swami Brahmananda) says that sometimes he feels as if he is not of this world. The Master also used to say, ‘With whom shall I speak if Naren and Rakhai are not by me? They are of very pure mind—they are Nârâyana Himself, I feel my lips burning if I talk with worldly persons.’ What purity! You must be all as pure as he.”

At night, after the service, the Swami sat downstairs in the main building. The disciple asked him 'Kindly tell me how I can realize the Master.'

Swami "You have seen the Holy Mother and have received her blessing. Why should you worry?"

Disciple "But Mahâraj I cannot at all make my mind calm. Please tell me how I can make it calm."

Swami "This is not a sweet in the hand of a child that you can coax it out of him. But don't worry. The Master used to say 'I see an ocean in a drop.' If we proceed towards him a single step, he will approach us by a thousand steps. Take refuge in him and repeat his name. Gradually you will realize him."

Disciple "Mahârâj, I am told that without renouncing the world one cannot get his grace."

Swami (Sternly) "What have you, which you can renounce? Remain in whatever condition and wherever he keeps you. You cannot realize him by doing anything. Through his grace everything is possible. Many practise hard Tapasyâ and yet do not realize his grace while others very easily get it."

6th June

In the afternoon the disciple was sitting with S by the side of the Ganges, when the Swami came there. S was a sweet man and naturally attracted the love of the Swami. The Swami began to tell him of the love the Master bore towards them. He said "My mother would not allow me to stay at my village home even during holidays, for fear that I might mix with bad boys and spoil myself. But she would cry when I returned to Calcutta. The Master also used to cry when I returned from Dakshineswar to Calcutta. Oh, how can I explain to you how he used to love us? He would go to Calcutta in a carriage in order to feed Purna. He would wait near the school where Purna read, send someone to bring him, and then feed him with delicacies. He would say 'What is this that has happened to me? You have not even a mat¹ to receive me. Yet I am restless to see you!' One day he was found outside Balaram Babu's house where I used to stay. Balaram Babu was not at home. The Master did not enter the house for fear

¹ People in the East squat and so use carpets or mats in their drawing rooms, and not chairs, to receive people

of rebuke. He had come to see me'. Afterwards someone called him in. His love knew no bounds and one drop of it could fill us full. Everyone thus thought that he was the most beloved of the Master. He used to say, 'I can stand everything except egotism'. That is why when he wanted to meet anyone, he sent Hriday beforehand, to see if the man was proud. He has left a mould for us. We have now to knead the clay of the mind, eliminating all stones and rubbish from it and cast it in the mould and a beautiful form will easily emerge. He came for the whole world."

Disciple "Please tell us of your experience when you first met the Master."

Swami "On the night of my first visit to Dakshineswar myself and another devotee slept on the verandah outside the Master's room. I could not sleep well because of the shoutings of the night watchmen. At last I had a little sleep. But just then the Master came to us, nude, with his cloth rolled under his arm. He woke us up and said, 'Do you know Narendra?' He is a very good boy and lives at Simla¹. He is well up in music, studies, and everything

¹ A particular quarter of Calcutta

Ask him to see me once I want to see him very much Tell him to come tomorrow in a carriage—the hire shall be paid from here ' So saying he left us and we lay down again We were about to fall asleep when he came again and said 'Do tell him to come once My inside is being clawed like the earth clawed by a cat. Ask him to come tomorrow positively Will you?' When he went away, I thought within myself 'How deeply does he love him ! And the boy does not come to see him ! How cruel and wicked !' Very soon the Master came again and began to entreat us to tell Narendra to come, and praised him highly Thus the whole night passed

"Another night I was sleeping in the Master's room At dead of night I woke up and found the Master going from one end of his room to the other, saying 'Mother, I do not want this Do not bring me honour from men Don't, Mother, don't I spit on it ' He said this and ran like a mad man in the room I was filled with great wonder I thought 'How strange ! People are so eager for fame, and he is entreating the Mother not to give it to him ! Why is this happening before me ? Is it for my personal edification ?' "

29th October

A young man who had lately entered the Order was finding it inconvenient to continue his Sâdhanâ at the Belur Math on account of its being crowded. He wanted to go to Benares and so had gone to Calcutta to beg his train-fare. The Swami did not like this. When the new monk returned from Calcutta he said to him

“Are you not ashamed to beg—you a young man? You are a Sadhu—walk all the way to Benares. Do you think you will go comfortably to Benares and repeat the Lord’s name a few times and the Lord will hasten to you? God cannot be realized so easily. ‘O my mind, dost thou think thou wilt attain the Divine Mother with thy hypocritical love?’ She is not a sweet in the hand of a child that thou wilt coax it out of him.” Boys have nowadays a fancy to give up work, as if they have all become Sukadeva. This is the result of reading *Kathâmrta* (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by M). M’s books record the conversations of a few days only. ‘Call on the Lord in solitude.’ That is all right. But who weeps for Him? Who can weep for Him? Sattva and Tamas both look alike. Tamas begets sleep, laziness and

aversion for work Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) used to say 'The country is immersed in Tamas Like a delirious patient, it is thinking that it is all right and does not want to take any medicine I have found the remedy It is now necessary to apply it Poisonous drugs are the remedies for delirium, so is Rajas the cure for Tamas We must bring Rajas into the country in order to free it from Tamas' Varâgya (dispassion) and Tamas are quite different things

"Go and study We shall bear your expenses You must have the knowledge of the Sâstras, if you want to realize God Though the Master did not know how to read and write, yet he heard many books read out to him And he remembered everything At the Cossipore Garden, Sasi Mahârâj (Swami Ramakrishnananda) was once reading to him the Adhyâtma Râmâyana in the original Sanskrit Swamiji asked him 'Sir, you do not know how to read and write Do you understand anything of this Sanskrit reading?' The Master replied 'Though I have not read myself, I have heard many things And I know the meaning of every word' Everything about him was unique One day

Dr Mahendra Sarkar came to the Master at Shvampur at about 10 in the morning and left at about 3 or 4 in the afternoon. On seeing this Mani Mallick said 'Sir one day there was music at Kristodas Place. All the big people of Calcutta came to the party. Dr Sarkar also came but rose to leave after some five minutes. On being requested to stay a little longer he said 'No I cannot. I have much work to do. I cannot stay longer. That same Mahendra Sarkar spent today five or six hours apparently for nothing'—This is certainly strange'.

May, 1913

A scripture class used to be held in the Visitors' Room at the Belur Math every afternoon at three (except on Sundays) in which the monks as well as the visitors used to join. Once during the first week of May, the Swami said at the end of the class

"One day Gosainji (Vijaya Krishna Goswami) came to the Master and begged him to free him from lust. The Master touched him. That touch produced wonderful results. On another occasion, another came and said to Sri Ramakrishna: 'Sir, I feel so attracted by my wife that I cannot devote my mind to any other thing.

aversion for work Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) used to say 'The country is immersed in Tamas Like a delirious patient, it is thinking that it is all right and does not want to take any medicine I have found the remedy It is now necessary to apply it Poisonous drugs are the remedies for delirium, so is Rajas the cure for Tamas We must bring Rajas into the country in order to free it from Tamas' Vairâgya (dispassion) and Tamas are quite different things

"Go and study We shall bear your expenses You must have the knowledge of the Sâstras, if you want to realize God Though the Master did not know how to read and write, yet he heard many books read out to him And he remembered everything At the Cossipore Garden, Sasi Mahârâj (Swami Ramakrishnananda) was once reading to him the Adhyâtma Râmâyana in the original Sanskrit Swamiji asked him 'Sir, you do not know how to read and write Do you understand anything of this Sanskrit reading?' The Master replied 'Though I have not read myself, I have heard many things And I know the meaning of every word' Everything about him was unique One day

Dr. Mahendrar Sarkar came to the Master at Shvampukur at about 10 in the morning and left at about 3 or 4 in the afternoon. On seeing this Mani Ma'ick said 'Sir one day there was music at Kristodas Pal's. All the big people of Calcutta came to the party. Dr. Sarkar also came but rose to leave after some five minutes. On being requested to stay a little longer, he said 'No, I cannot, I have much work to do, I cannot stay longer. That same Mahendra Sarkar spent today five or six hours apparently for nothing'—This is certainly strange.'

May, 1913

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All my business is going to rack and ruin Please change my mental condition ' 'Very well,' the Master replied, 'bring some fruits one day I shall eat up your Mayâ ' When, however, the fruits were brought, the Master could not eat them, for though he tried, he could not raise them to his lips I am told the man suffered a great deal on account of his wife afterwards "

Ramlal (nephew of Sri Ramakrishna) came from Dakshineswar He had long lived with and served the Master and had often sent him into ecstasy by singing devotional songs He was, therefore, dearly loved by the Order of Ramakrishna In course of conversation he said

"Formerly, the Master and Hriday used to live in the large room of the Kuthi (a building in the Dakshineswar Temple) and the Master's mother used to sleep in an adjoining small room Many nights they used to hear a man with shoes on going up and down the stairs, and opening doors and windows It was a ghost—possibly of a European For the Kuthi had been a European residence before the Temple was built The Master used to say 'We cannot say that this world is entirely false For we are actually seeing it with our eyes Nor can we say that it is

real For just see how this garden has changed Formerly it was a graveyard, and this Kuthi, the house of a European But now! And some days after this Temple also will vanish, and who knows what will come next?"

"One day he said to me 'Once I had a vision, in which I saw many dancing round the Divine Mother, clapping their hands and crying 'Victory to Kâh' 'Victory to Kâh' " and Rani Rasmani standing in the south-west corner of the room Among those dancing were Mathur, Sambhu Balaram Jaygopal Sen and others, also some white men and women whom I do not know yet "

Swami "They were Westerners A Western lady came here one day When she was shown the relics of Sri Ramakrishna, she began to cry She took a small bit of one of the mementos She said she would ever keep it in her bosom "

At night a class was held on Raja Yoga When it was over, the Swami said to the monks "Merely reading all these things won't do You must meditate on these and build your life accordingly None of you who have come here through the grace of the Lord, are insignificant You are all lions It won't be enough for you to say

to people that you *know* this and that or that Swamiji has said so and so. You must demonstrate the validity of these teachings by your own life. Everyone of you must be a model of renunciation, discrimination, and passionlessness.”

14th May

At the Belur Monastery, the Swami said at the end of the afternoon class

“One must have true Nishthâ—steadfast, wholehearted devotion and attachment to that aspect of God which one has chosen to realize. But let that not produce repulsion for the other aspects. I was once told a story, which was true. There was a rich man who had the image of Mother Kâlî installed in his home. The Goddess used to be worshipped with rich offerings everyday. One day a Vaishnava came and bowed before the image and addressing it said ‘Sister-in-law, how is my elder brother?’¹ The Master of the house understood the attitude of the Vaishnava. He welcomed him and gave

¹ Some Vaishnavas are so fanatical that they refuse to look upon Siva, the consort of Kâlî, as the Lord Himself and want to consider Him as only a devotee of Vishnu, and as such their spiritual elder brother.

him a seat, and in order to teach him a good lesson called one of his men to his side and asked him to prepare a dish of pungent yam. The dish was accordingly prepared and served to the Vaishnava. He did not know that it was yam and so pungent. He took one morsel and at once felt a burning sensation in his mouth. The host asked 'Sir why are you not taking any more?' 'Sir he replied 'it is yam' 'Sirrah, thy elder brother could take and digest potfuls of poison' and thou canst not take one dish of yam' 'Hallo, who is there' 'Bring me a stick. I must break this rascal's head if he does not eat all the yam' The Vaishnava was humbled to the dust. He prayed earnestly to be pardoned and promised never to speak of Siva in that fashion again. The man was then feasted properly and sent away with solemn warning not to be so bigoted again.

"But if the Nishthâ is true and devoid of hatred for other Gods and Goddesses, it leads quickly to Divine realization. The Master once told us a story. There were two brothers. The younger was the devotee

¹ Refers to Siva's drinking the poison which arose from the ocean when it was churned by the gods and demons for nectar.

of Gopâla, Child-Krishna, and the elder of Kâlî. Once a nice bunch of plantains grew in their garden and each of them thought that as soon as it would get ripe, he would offer it to his Deity. In course of time the fruits got ripe, but the younger brother happened to be absent from home. The elder brother plucked them and offered them to Kâlî. When the younger brother returned and learnt that the plantains had been offered to Kâlî, he got furious and went with a stick to the shrine of Kâlî to break Her image. But as soon as he entered the shrine, he found that there was no Kâlî but the image of Gopâla installed on the throne! He was struck with deep remorse. He thought he had by mistake entered the shrine of Gopâla. He came out and went into the other shrine with the stick in hand. But lo, there also he found the image of Gopâla! Then the truth dawned on him. He understood that He who was Gopâla was also Kâlî.

“One who has realized God cannot be bigoted. Take the case of Vijaya Krishna Goswami. He was a Brâhmo, but afterwards he gave up the Brâhmo Samâj and practised Tapasyâ and dressed himself like a Vaishnava. One day he said humbly to Sri Ramakrishna ‘Sir, many want to

receive initiation from me Should I initiate them?" "Why not?" the Master replied "You are a descendant of Advaita Prabhu (one of the foremost disciples of Sri Chaitanya), you are as such born as a Guru You can, of course, initiate" When Swamiji returned from America, Goswamiji sent for him He himself could not come for he was not doing well When Swamiji went to his place Goswamiji vacated his seat and asked him to sit thereon When Swamiji remonstrated he said "I know how he (Sri Ramakrishna) used to look upon you How can we understand your proper worth?" "

Last Week of May

A monk was reading *Sri Sri Rāmakrishna Kathāmṛta* (The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna by M) in the Visitors' Room of the Belur Monastery In course of the reading the Swami said in reference to Kedarnath Chatterjee (a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna)

"Formerly he used to live at Lahore and was a Brâhmo He had deep love for God One day the thought of not having realized God so pained him that he went to jump from the top of a hill to kill himself A

cowherd boy saw him and said, 'What are you doing?' Thus obstructed he eagerly asked the boy, 'Shall I realize God?' The boy also said, 'Surely you will.' Kedar took this assurance as from God Himself, and he returned to Bengal.

"While on his way to Calcutta, he by chance got down at Ballv and drawn as it were by an invisible force came to Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar."

Reader "There are two different versions of the meeting of Chaitanya and Rai Ramananda."

Swami "Why should you believe everything? Believe only in the authoritative books. You must have great strength of mind."

The Swami sang

"O Mother, if I but die with Thy holy name on my lips, then must Thou save this helpless child of Thine

'I care not if I have killed the sacred cow or the holy Brâhmana, or even the child in its mother's womb. Oh, I care not if I have sinned by drinking, or even by killing a woman

'In spite of these darkest sins, I know I can verily become Brahman, if I but die with Thy holy name on my lips'

‘ But you must not infer from this that you are to sin now and take the name of the Mother at the moment of death. Unless you repeat Her name even from now with great faith and strength of word you will not even remember it at the moment of death.

‘ The essence of Sri Ramanandji's teaching is that one should give up all pride and egotism. A little meditation of no good. God cannot be realized through such lukewarm moods. One must yearn deeply, one must become restless.

“Just as the Lord has covered us with His Mâyâ, He also graciously incarnates Himself and practises Sadhana in order to show how we are to rend asunder the Mâyâ. He Himself is also breaking the creations of Mâyâ. A man once went to a garden with his several sons. The sons played about. Some plucked flowers, some plucked green cocoanuts, but one went to angle in the tank. When it was evening the man called all his sons. All came except the one who was fishing. The father sent for him again and again but he would not come—he was deeply absorbed in catching fish. When it was quite dark, the father himself went, broke the fishing rod to pieces and dragged the boy to the carriage. Thus does the Lord

come from time to time shatter our play-things and drag us to Him '

30th May

In the afternoon in the Visitors' Room at the Belur Monastery, the disciple was listening to the reading of *Sri Sri Râmakrishna Kathâmrta* (The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna by M) Someone said that Sri Ramakrishna used to accept one as disciple only after proper enquiry—after observing his ways, manners, and physiognomy and asking about his people and if he was free from debts On hearing this the disciple said "Then it is not true that all were recipients of his grace There is a song about the Master, in which a devotee sings that however degraded one might be, one would have the shelter of the Master's blessed feet Is this not true, then?"

Suami "Why not? He showered his grace on Girish Chandra Ghosh and even on many prostitutes One day the ladies of Balaram Babu's family were sitting before the Master in his room, when a prostitute named Ramanî passed along a road close by The Master called out to her and asked 'Why don't you come nowadays?' The

ladies were scandalized to hear the Master talking with a prostitute

“Shortly after the Master took them to visit the shrines. When they reached the Kali temple, the Master addressed the Mother saying ‘Mother, Thou indeed hast become the prostitute Ramani. Thou hast become both the prostitute and the chaste woman.’ The ladies understood that they were wrong in hating Ramani, that the Master spoke with her, knowing her to be the Mother Herself and that they had nothing to be unusually proud of their chastity, for it was all due to Her will.”

Disciple “The Master might have been all right in not hating the prostitute. But unless we hate the prostitutes, how shall we live away from them? At least we must pity them even if we do not hate them.”

Swami “Why should you hate? Even pity comes out of egotism. Have you not heard the Master’s stories of the tiger-Nârâyana and the elephant-Nârâyana? If we are to live away from a tiger and an elephant, are we to hate or pity them? Salute them from afar, thinking that it is through the will of God that they are what they are and that it is through His will again that you

are what you are, and that His will can in a moment redeem them for ever and drag you down. Destroy your pride and egotism once for all. The prostitute Ramani has now become a great devotee and sheds tears in remembrance of the Master."

17th June

It was again at the Visitors' Room at the Belur Math. After the afternoon class on *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* was over, the Swami said

"Every Sâdhaka must take up a definite attitude towards God and stick to it. He must maintain it under all conditions. There are many Bhâvas (attitudes) possible. The Master practised all Bhâvas—as a friend, a lady-friend and a sweetheart of the Lord, and also in the attitude of Balarâma, the brother of Sri Krishna. One can also practise the Bhâva of Mahâdeva.

"One must have intense indifference to the world and deep hankering after the Lord—"I must realize Him even in this birth, even now!" No slow process! Remember this carefully. Work is no use if you do not get immersed in Him. Make your heart a temple of the Lord and install Him there.

Take His name and for ever love yourself in Him "

Next day the mother of the Swami visited the Math. After she had rested a little the disciple asked her "When the Master asked you to give him your son what did he actually say?"

She replied "He said 'Give me your son. I feel much pleased even when he gives me a glass of water.' I said 'Does anybody give away her son for nothing?' He then smiled and replied 'What shall I give you? May you have devotion to your Chosen Deity.' "

29th and 30th June

The Swami had come on a visit to Rammkhal in East Bengal and was staying at the ancestral home of Sir J. C. Bose. The residents of the village were celebrating the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna and there was great enthusiasm among all sections of people. Men, women, boys, girls, Hindus, Mussulmans, all came to visit the Swami and everyone felt a deep love and attraction for him. A villager who was a teacher in a Dacca school, was narrating his family mishaps to the Swami. The Swami said

“There was a Brâhmo gentleman, named Mani Mallick, who used to visit the Master. His eldest son had seen the Master in the Church of Keshab Chandra Sen and had said to his father ‘He seems to me to be a true Sâdhu. Go and visit him.’ When Mani Mallick came to the Master, the Master said to him ‘Are you not —’s father? You look like that.’ Then that son died. Mallick was overwhelmed with grief and came to the Master for relief. At first the Master said ‘Indeed, what can you do? The bereavement of a son is no trifling thing,’ and so on. He then sat silent for a while, after which he began to sing, clapping his hands ‘To arms! To arms! O man, Death enters thy home in battle array!’ etc. Before he left Mallick said to the Master ‘My mind is quite peaceful now. Now I do not feel miserable.’”

Next day the Swami said, addressing the monks who had accompanied him “I am overjoyed to see their (of the villagers) enthusiasm. The Master fed us so often with sweets, and loved us so much! That made us go to him. But what have *they* got? They have merely read of him in books. And yet how full of joy and enthusiasm they are!”

In this hot sun they went to the station and themselves carried all loads barefooted and bare-headed. And they are cooking for all. They also serve cholera patients and untouchables and thus rid themselves of all pride, egotism and fear. And they are quite mindful of their studies also. All this fills me with a great joy. It is to see these things that I hasten to these parts, and not to earn name and fame for myself. What am I doing? The Master himself has done everything already. Swami (Swami Vivekananda) once said 'The Master will be worshipped in every home. Go forth all of you, and spread his name everywhere.' Otherwise what shall I, an ignorant man, preach? When I see in this, I think within myself 'This body will perish one day. What is the good of remaining at home for the sake of health? If my presence serves any purpose of the people let me suffer all the troubles of travel and movement. I don't mind.'¹ Otherwise why should I undergo all the troubles of irregular

¹ Just on his return to the Belur Monastery from this visit, the Swami had a severe attack of cholera. He suffered for a long time from Kala-azar contracted during one of his visits to Eastern Bengal and may be said to have died of it.

meals and sleeplessness ' You see yourselves there is no pleasure in these

"In these places I actually see what the Master and Swami had prophesied before You have not to do much Just observe these things carefully, and you will learn to love the Master automatically Is it easy to meditate and repeat His name continually ' Impossible Therefore meditate as long as you can and devote the rest of the time to selfless service for others Thus gradually will your mind be purified and be attached to the Lord "

The Swami thus narrated his early life in course of another conversation

"My mother used now and then to shut herself up in a room and meditate all day If we happened to return home from Calcutta on those days, we had to live in a neighbouring house, and meet her next day She was very strict in her discipline She would never allow us to stay with her in the village home, lest that might spoil our education But she would never utter a harsh word to her daughters-in-law or even to servants I was very naughty as a young boy So I have got some scars on my head Swami used to say, 'He is no boy, who has no scars on his head ' "

5th March, 1916

It was the annual general meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission. When the agenda of the meeting had been gone through the Swami thus spoke to all present:

“Elephants have two sets of teeth, one outside—the tusks, and another inside to munch food. The activities of our Mission are like the elephant’s tusks. Whatever work you may do—conducting Sevāśramas or doing relief work, unless you have character, all will be in vain. What is wanted is character, purity, steadfast devotion to God. If you have them, you will prosper, otherwise you will totally fail. (*To the lay members*) It is no good being only members of the Mission. You must build up your own character, you must make the whole world your own through love, so that people may find inspiration from your selflessness, renunciation, and purity. You must drive away all egotism and pride from your heart and consider yourselves as servants of the Lord and thus serve humanity.

“Our Master never sought name and fame, and so they have come to him in profusion. Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) often said in his later life that he was disgusted with

name and fame Be you all men of character Do you grow into gods Only then would the work of the Mission prosper This is my earnest prayer to you all ”

After this the meeting was dissolved

That night, after meal, the Swami came and sat on the bench on the ground floor overlooking the Ganges, and thus spoke to the monks and devotees gathered before him

“In the world the mind is scattered on various things, on Kâma (lust) and Kâanchana (gold) It is the function of Avidyâ (Ignorance) not to allow the mind to be concentrated But our task is to concentrate it Sâdhanâ is nothing but the bringing together of the scattered mind So long as there is the least desire the mind cannot be absorbed in God Along with meditation and repetition of the Lord’s name, we must reason keenly and carefully—we must search out the desires hiding in the dark corners of the mind and drive them away This is what is called in the Gitâ as ‘saving the self by the self ’ Thus we are to conquer the mind We shall then find the Peace Everlasting within ourselves and become sages Simply meditat-

ing or repeating God's names without a y effort at rooting out the desires will not do

"During my last visit to Dacca, I used to talk day and night with the devotees. This would often cause insomnia. Of course I would repeat and explain only the words of the Master—I knew myself nothing—yet I could not sleep at night. That was because I am but a small vessel'. But we have seen the Master going again and again into ecstasy and Samâdhi—it was so natural with him. No impure person could ever live with and wait on the Master. I could not have lived with him without his grace. Now I wonder how I could do so²

"One day he went to see the performance of the *Chaitanya-lîlâ* at the Star Theatre. Before he went, he said to me 'If I fall into Samâdhi there, people would all turn towards me and there would be disturbance. If you find me about to go into Samâdhi, talk to me about various other things'. But when he went to the Theatre, he could not stop

¹ The Swami had lately returned from his tour in the company of Swami Brahmananda and others

² The Swami was for a long time a personal attendant of the Master, who considered him the purest of his disciples

Samâdhi, try as he could I began to repeat the name of God and then slowly he came round Such superconscious states were natural with him, and he had to struggle hard in order to hold his mind down to the normal plane But small 'vessels' as we are, we have to practise variously and hard in order to attain the state of Samâdhi For us it is so difficult "

8th March

It was 8 p.m. Some monks and lay devotees had assembled in the Visitors' Room at the Belur Math and were listening to the reading of Swami Vivekananda's works

When it was over, Swami Akhandananda (a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna) said, "From tomorrow I shall teach them the Upanishads " At that the Swami remarked

"What other Upanishads would you teach them when there is the living Upanishad? The life of the Master is the living, flaming Upanishad None could have understood the meaning of the Râdhâ-Krishna cult if Sri Chaitanya had not been born and demonstrated it in his life Even so, the Master is the living demonstration of the truths of the

Upanishads The Upanishads have been current for many centuries and people also have been reading them And yet they bow down to our illiterate Master and accept his words as gospel truths He never read the Upanishads or any other book Yet how is it that he could explain those subtle and complex truths in so simple and straight a manner? If you want to read the Vedas, you have to commit the grammar to memory and read various commentaries, in which every commentator has sought to explain the texts in his own way Innumerable scholars have been arguing over the texts without coming to any conclusion Our Master, however, has in very simple language explained all those truths, and his words are extant When you have such a living fountain before you, why dig a well for water?"

The day before, the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna, twelve of the novices had been initiated into Sannyâsa Today they begged a rupee of a lay devotee, hired a boat and went to the Dakshineswar Temple The Swami did not like this He said to them

"You shaved your heads (became monks) but yesterday, and you already think that you are beyond all disciplinary restrictions? Unless one observes disciplinary rules can

one go beyond them? Those who have renounced, who are Sannyasins—they are the teachers of men. And you, having renounced, have become such. But how is it that you begged money today to pay for the boat-hire? Is that spirituality? If you were so eager to see the place of the Master's Sâdhanâ, why, instead of begging money, did you not go to Bally and beg the ferryman to take you over, or swim across the Ganges? Or you could have walked all the way *via* the Howrah bridge. Then I would have known that you are indeed fit to be teachers of men. You are thinking that you will have Maths and from there would spread the ideas of the Master, and that otherwise the Master's ideas would vanish from the earth! You may build as many Maths as you like, or you may take Sannyâsa, but if you have no spirituality, all will be in vain. On the other hand, those who are not building Maths or taking Sannyâsa, the householders—if they have spirituality and live the true life, will surely be worshipped by people even though they may not wear the ochre robe. Whoever will assimilate the ideals of the Master in his life, be he a Sannyâsin or a householder, will be great. The Master himself is spreading his own ideas. Never

think that if you Sannyasins do not preach his ideas, these will not be known' Rather thank your stars that you have better opportunities than the householders and are living in the blessed company of these great souls (the direct disciples of the Master) '

Suami Akhandananda 'Six of us at one time lived in the same cottage at Hrishikesh for nearly two months. This very much astonished the other Sadhus of the place. They said to us 'How do you brother-disciples live together? If only two of us, brother-disciples, should live for two days together we would begin to quarrel.' Once I told this to Vijaya Krishna Goswami at Brindaban. He was overjoyed to hear me and said 'There is nothing surprising in this. It is no ordinary thread that binds you. Was your Master an ordinary man and Sâdhu? Had he been an ordinary man could he have trained you Calcutta boys up in this fashion? I do not wonder that there is such love and union amongst you.' '

Suami "I tell you for a fact I am not enamoured of the mere ochre cloth. I want renunciation and dispassion. I very much appreciate the life of Nâg Mahasaya (Saint Durga Charan Nag—a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna). He did not wear the ochre

cloth, and yet what a great soul he was and how great was his renunciation !

"When I visited Dacca last time, I went to Nag Mahâsâva's place before I left. One of his friends told me that a Brahmana used to come to his house to read the Bhagavata. He would read a verse and Nag Mahâsâva would expound for a long time. Pandits read the Bhagavata, but Nâg Mahâsâya had actually *realized* the truths it contained and they were, therefore, as vivid to him as any sensible object. His father, however, would not like his long exposition. He would get angry and say 'Well won't you allow me to listen to the reading of the Bhagavata?' Nag Mahâsâya was infinitely patient. He would remain silent."

Saami Akhandananda "Suren Mukherji, afterwards Baba Premananda Bharati, was devoted to the Master. He used to visit the Baranagore Math for some time. He went to preach Hinduism in America. Once he went on a visit to Nâg Mahâsâya's village. As soon as Nâg Mahâsâya saw him, he began to dance in joy raising his hands and crying out 'Calcutta !' 'Calcutta !' That is to say, he had come from the very place where the Master used to live. Sri Gouranga also, you know, went into ecstasy when he learnt

that the musical instrument called *khol* which is played in devotional music was made of the clay of the village he was just then visiting¹

“You will be surprised to hear of the hard austerities Swamiji (Vivekananda) practised. When he was wandering as an itinerant monk all over India, I would follow him sometimes. In those days, before he left for America he used to carry with him a coarse blanket, and a bag full of books weighing about twenty seers. Once he fell on hard days at Lmdī, when a poor Brâhmana gave him shelter. He lived with him for a few days. The Maharajah of Lmdī, in the mean time, came to know of his greatness and requested him to come to his palace and live there. But Swamiji refused lest his removal to the palace might cause pain to the Brâhmana. The Maharajah, however, used to send him various royal dishes, and the poor Brâhmana also would partake of them.”

¹ The clay of the village was used for making the *khol* and this again was used in the singing of the Lord's name. Thus the village gave, though remotely, a suggestion of the Lord. But even this was sufficient in his case to bring on the ecstasy.

SPIRITUAL TALKS
BY SWAMI TURIYANANDA



Swami Turiyananda

SPIRITUAL TALKS

By *Swami Turiyananda*

I

7th June, 1915

*Swami S*¹ "One may have any amount of Samâdhi and Dhyâna (spiritual concentration and meditation), but one must never forget to love Him. What is the use of this life if one does not love Him?"

Swami "Yes, one is bound to admit that 'when one feels oneself as body, one must consider oneself as the servant of the Lord, when one thinks oneself as the Jiva, the individualized soul, one must consider oneself as a part of Him, and when one feels oneself as the Atman (Self), one is the same as the Lord Himself'

"How can a man who runs for a remedy at the slightest suffering, refuse to submit to the Lord?"

Sri Râmakrishna Kathâmrta (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*) was being read. The Swami observed

¹ Swami Shivananda, another direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna

“Dakshineswar was in those days as divine and blissful as Kailasa² From morning till one in the afternoon, all were busy preparing for the worship of the Deities and then worshipping them, while Sri Ramakrishna himself was always talking about God, and people sat spell-bound listening to him. The atmosphere vibrated with thoughts of God. Even his jokes and funs related to God and culminated in Samâdhi. He would rest after the midday meal, but only for a short while. The rest of his day was given to discoursing about God. In the evening he would visit the Kâlî temple and there fan the Mother, then return to his room reeling under divine intoxication. He would often ask those who practised Sâdhanâ if they felt a kind of intoxication in the morning and evening. At night there was scarcely any sleep for him. No sooner had he lain down than he would get up and rouse all who slept in his room, saying, ‘Do not sleep so much. Get up and meditate.’ He would then lie down again and get up by early dawn and recite the names of God in his inimitable sweet voice. Others also would get up and

The celebrated abode of Siva

sit down to Japa and meditation. Now and then he would go up to them and correct their postures."

10th June

Swami "In order to realize the Self you have to scale the highest peak of renunciation."

11th June

Swami "Is it easy to detach the mind from all objects? Only a hero can do that. The external objects are ever trying to enter into your mind and conquer you. In the mind itself there are many layers one upon another. It is no use merely closing the eyes and ears."

13th June

Swami "X wants to finish studying Râja Yoga quickly. But we poured out our very life in this quest. We have been doing this ever since our childhood. Yet even now the mind has not been purified. There are still attachment and hatred in it. O Lord, make me the servant of the servant of Thy servant!"

"Egotism is no good, it is extremely pernicious. Egotism is like drinking wine, it

leads astray the senses The Master used to say that water accumulates only in a low land Only in humility the good qualities of the mind and heart become manifest Pride always holds the head high That which is elastic and unbreakable like steel, that indeed is strength He alone is strong, who can live in harmony with different natures in a spirit of amicable compromise

“Make yourself for ever His, then there will be no more fear Swamiji (Vivekananda) used to say, ‘Since you have been born on earth, leave a lasting mark on it’ At the Baranagore Math he said, ‘Let me tell you, our names will be recorded in history’ Swami Yogananda ridiculed him But Swamiji replied ‘Well, well, you will see I can convince everyone of the truths of Vedânta If you will not listen to me, I shall go to the Pariah villages and teach Vedânta to the villagers’

“If you want to preach, you must also give something Preaching is not merely lecturing to a class or explaining a book You have to give them something Therefore you must accumulate spirituality beforehand And never pride yourself on your having gained control over the passions If you do, they will at once raise

their heads. Ever prone to sin, 'O Lord save me from them

"There are several obstructions to concentration. *Lava*, *Vikṣepa*, *Kashava*, *Rasavāda*. *Lava* is the mind being overcome by *Tamas* (inertia)—the mind falls asleep and loses consciousness. Most aspirants are held down by *Lava*. *Vikṣepa* is the scattering of the mind on multifarious objects. *Kashava* is in a word meditation distasteful—one feels disinclined to meditate. But one must still persist. *Rasavāda* is the mind being fascinated by the vision of divine forms and refusing to ascend higher. Passions will last so long as the body lasts. But through His grace they cannot raise their heads.

15th June

Swami "It is no good merely working. Work is drudgery if there is no spiritual feeling behind it."

16th June

Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmṛita (The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna by M.) was read. In one passage Sri Ramakrishna was mentioned as saying "It is not true that He can be

realized through work. But through unselfish work grows the eager longing to realize Him. This eager longing draws down His grace and then man realizes Him.

Apropos of this, the Swami said: "A little casual reading of the scriptures and a little meditation are not enough to realize the Lord. You must yearn to see Him. The heart must pant and pine for Him. The Master said to us: 'It is because I had such intense longing for the Mother that She gave me every convenience—She gave me this Kâli Temple and Mathur Babu'.¹ If there is sincere longing for God, everything becomes favourable."

"There is no other way than Bhakti."

Swami S. "Quite true. Meditate on His lotus-feet, the senses will withdraw of themselves and the mind will lose itself in Him. Râmprasâd says in a song that devotion is at the root of all spiritual achievements. Râmprasâd was in a sense the ideal of Sri Râmakrishna. The Master used to say: 'Mother, Thou hast revealed Thyself to Râmprasâd,'

¹ Son-in-law of Rani Rasmani, foundress of the Temple. He served the Master with great devotion and proved helpful to him in many respects during his Sadhana.

was about 1st Troad. I got to know the Master's teachings as Brahma-vidya with Jnana."

With Jnana

Said I: "When I first used to go to the Master, when the very utterance of the name of God will bring tears to my eyes" (*To the Master*) Do you cry when you take His name? Ah, what a supernal condition! Just consider!—The very utterance of His name makes you cry!"

Sivami S: "When I first used to go to the Master, I would often feel inclined to cry. One night I cried much on the river-side near the *vel* tree. Just at that time the Master in his room was enquiring where I had gone. When I returned to him, he asked me to sit down and said: 'The Lord is greatly pleased if one cries to Him. The tears of love wash away all mental impurities accumulated through ages. It is very good to cry to God.'

"Another day I was meditating in the Panchavati grove. My concentration became very deep. Just then the Master came towards me from the side of the *thau* tree. As soon as he looked at me, I burst into tears. The

Master stood still. I felt something creeping up inside my bosom and I was overcome by an irrepressible fit of shaking. The Master remarked that this giving was not for nothing; it was a sort of ecstasy. I then followed him to his room where he gave me something to eat. The awakening of the Kundalini was an easy matter for him. He could do this even without touching or merely standing near by.

21st June

Swami "Man is trying hard to make himself happy. But nothing succeeds unless He wills it. Freedom can be realized in two ways, by identifying oneself with Him and by living in eternal self-surrender to Him. There can be no freedom of will away from Him.

"Reliance on one's apparent self leads to ruin. To presume to be all-knowing is extremely harmful. Self-reliance or self-confidence means faith in the Higher Self. To persist in remaining what one already is

¹ Kundalini = the 'coiled-up,' the spiritual power lying dormant in Muladhâra centre at the bottom of the spine, which when roused forces its way to the brain, when man attains the realization of the Transcendental Reality.

or in holding on to one's preconceived opinions at any cost—such self-importance is bad.

22nd June

Saami "One must have the capacity to love. Oh how madly we used to love in our boyhood! I loved my brothers so much that the thought of renouncing them to become a Sannyasin, used to make me cry. But afterwards the Master snapped these ties one by one. He asked me, 'Whom do you love?' I said, 'I do not love anyone.' 'Oh, you dry fellow!' the Master remarked."

24th June

Saami "You can never be emancipated by adoring a man as man—you must look upon him as God. However great he may be in spiritual wisdom and dispassionateness, however highly endowed he may be with spiritual powers, the worship of him will not effect your liberation if you do not perceive him as God Himself. Without such a consciousness, his worship may serve to communicate to you his spiritual qualities and powers, but nothing more. If you worship a Divine Incarnation, knowing him as such

or not, he will surely grant you God-realization. Sisupâla attained God-realization even by hating Sri Krishna. The Gopis realized God even though they considered Sri Krishna as only their lover. A Gopi was shut up in her room by her husband. Her intense anguish at being separated from Sri Krishna destroyed her sins, and the joy she felt by meditating on him destroyed her religious merits (Punya), and she was liberated."

Disciple "But we are told that when devotion grows intense, one forgets the Divine majesties of God."

Suamî "That is after the devotee has realized God. He then carefully obliterates all consciousness of Divine powers in order to approach Him closer and closer. The Gopis were not ordinary human beings. Theirs were spiritual bodies. Continence is essential for Divine realization. If one can maintain Brahmacharya for twenty-eight years, one will realize Bhakti, Jnâna, everything. Lust is called Manasija, 'born in the mind'. Only a hero can conquer the senses and go beyond them to the super-conscious planes.

"I do not agree with you if you consider stubbornness as strength. Stubbornness is a cloak for weakness. The weak put it on in

order to hide their weakness Real strength knows how to bend and yet regain its true position ”

26th June

Swami “Swami P has written ‘We are not living on the plane of surmise, but of actual perception’ We must remember from time to time why we renounced the world and test ourselves if we are really progressing towards the goal ’

27th June

Swami “His (Sri Ramakrishna’s) initiation was no ordinary thing—he would wake up spiritual consciousness at once He would write some characters on the tongue and the disciple would feel something heaving up, wave after wave, within his chest He asked me if I would like to have Abhisheka (Tântrik initiation) I said, ‘I do not know’ ‘Then you need not have it’ he replied Once when I was returning from the Kâlî temple, after saluting the Mother, he said about me, ‘His “home”¹ is that

¹ By ‘home’ he evidently meant that aspect of Divinity, which a disciple’s inherent tendencies and potentialities indicated to be the ideal which he was consciously or unconsciously seeking to realize

high Power from which proceed name and form ' "

"I felt an intense longing for liberation I wanted very much to realize God even in this very life "

28th June

Swami "We have seen with our own eyes and heard with our own ears The tremendous enthusiasm of Swami Vivekananda for God-realization used to dumbfound us and make us despair of ourselves, in spite of all encouragement and assurance from the Master And we would think that this life would go in vain, without realizing God But at last favourable days came through the grace of the Master

"You will be struck dumb with wonder if I tell you the story of Swami Vivekananda's wandering days—the life of extreme renunciation he then lived Once in those days he wrote to me that he was passing his days 'like the crows, feeding himself—devoid of self-respect—at the house of others in great fear ' "

¹ A quotation from the *Vairâgya-Satakam* of Bhartrihari Extreme self-abnegation and self-abasement are the *sine qua non* of true Vairâgya, passionlessness and renunciation He who possesses nothing, to him alone the Lord comes

29th June

Su ami “None else, He alone is my all in all”—when you will feel like this and will not rely on anything, then will you be right. Now you are depending on earthly things, on wealth, man, and learning. Even great scholars get mad by a single screw getting loose in the brain. We do not rely on God. We rely on our money, our relations, our friends. But ‘O king, know that He is the treasure of those who have nothing’. When nothing will intervene between you and Him, then you will realize Him. Sri Krishna had broken all the ties of the Gopis. But their sense of shame still remained. That tie also he broke at last. When the Lord sees that man is finding it hard to give up anything for Him, then He Himself takes it away. ‘O Lord, take all things away from me, even those that I have kept hidden in my inmost heart’. ‘If, O man, thou wilt cross the ocean of relative existence, thou must give up desires for earthly things’.

“The Master used to say, ‘Do whatever you like after making the knowledge of oneness your own’. That is to say, know the Lord as the soul of your soul, the life of your life, the eye of your eye, and love Him. Nothing else than this, such as

asking things of God, is true devotion
 Supreme devotion cannot be had so long as
 there is the slightest desire in the mind ”

My Master was read Apropos of the
 passage, “Do you think that a man firmly
 convinced that there is a Reality behind all
 these appearances, One who is infinite
 bliss, a bliss compared with which these
 pleasures of the senses are simply playthings,
 can rest contented without struggling to
 attain It?” the Swami said

“Just see ! *Our* God is only a verbal affair
 A little meditation, a little Japa—this is a
 poor sort of life The heart must burst
 hungering for Him An intense anguish must
 fill it and life should seem to go out without
 Him—only then it will be right

“Nothing short of complete self-surrender
 to Him will do You call Him the Inner
 Controller (Antaryâmin), omniscient, and
 omnipresent, and yet you are afraid to sur-
 render yourself to Him ! ‘Thinkest thou
 that thou wilt realize Mother by thy hypo-
 critical devotion ? No, no, this is not a
 sweet in a child’s hand that thou wilt cajole
 it out of Her ’ You cannot deceive God
 He sees all ‘Thou art the doer, not
 I, Thou art the mechanic, I am the machine ’

‘I am a jealous God ’ If you love

anything else than God and do not renounce all for Him you cannot realize Him '

30th June

Swami "Nobody wants Him. Men want to get rid of their misery, to enjoy life. To conceive a 'motiveless' love for Him is very difficult. I knew a man who used to cry for solitude. But one day he asked, 'Shall I marry again?' "

1st July

Swami "Whenever Swamiji (Vivekananda) said 'I', he identified it with the all-comprehensive 'I'. When we say 'I', we identify it with the body, the senses, and the mind. Hence we have to say 'the servant I', 'the devotee I'. Swamiji would never identify his 'I' with any adjunct of the Self—he would identify himself with Brahman and go beyond body, mind, and intellect. This was his central and normal mood, and in that he used to pass the greatest part of his time. But such a mood does not come to us. We are living separate from Him. Hence we have to say 'Thou' and 'Thine' in reference to God."

Disciple "In order to realize the cosmic 'I', should those who are dualistic in spiritual practice, study books on Advaita?"

Suami "The Master used to say, 'Do whatever you like after making the knowledge of oneness your own. The true devotees always say 'Thou' and 'Thine', that is to say, 'O Lord, Thou art everything, and everything is Thine.' Wherein does this differ from Advaita? But if a devotee says 'I' and 'mine' and feels himself separate from and independent of Him, it is an extremely harmful dualism. Such a devotee is greatly deluded. The Master would often repeat 'Not I, not I', 'Thou, Thou', 'I am Thy servant, I am Thy servant'. A devotee must completely renounce all 'I' and 'mine'. How often Râmpasâd engaged himself in a loving quarrel with the Divine Mother and coaxed and cajoled Her! Such an intense and condensed spiritual mood must be realized—like water condensed into ice. Only then can we have a vision of His Divine forms. Gopâler Mâ¹ saw Gopâl following her gathering fire-wood for her, and Sri Ramakrishna saw Râmlâlâ² going about with him. It is the intensity

¹ One of the chief lady disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. She used to have constant vision of Gopala (Child Krishna).

² Sri Ramakrishna worshipped Râmlâlâ or Child Rama for some time. At that time he used to see Him constantly. (See *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*).

of spiritual feeling that counts. Whether you believe in His form or formlessness it does not matter. 'O lotus, what kind of love is thine? Thou givest only the smile of thy face to the sun thy husband. But thy honey thou yieldest to the bee!' If one considers God to be all in all, how can one find joy in worldly things?"

31d July

Swami "Eating, sleeping, fear and sexual intercourse—these are common features of both animal and man. The speciality of man is that he has knowledge and can distinguish right from wrong. The lower a man is, the greater is his joy in sense-objects. The higher he is, the greater is his pleasure in knowledge—a subtle joy which low natures cannot appreciate. See how they are spending their days in drinking, hunting, and running after women—just like beasts. What advantage is gained being born a man, if we do not refine and elevate our faculties? Those who have a refined mind can never stoop to these things.

"You want to go to the West? What is the use of making the mind out-going? Absorb yourself in meditation and be lost in Him. It would be excellent if you could

spend five years in exclusive meditation of the Master Then the West and here would become one

“ ‘I do not care a rap for history or other things—God is everything ’—What a beautiful saying ’ The stick of ego is lying on the waters of Sachchidânanda This is making the waters appear as divided Desires create the ego Desires keep us apart from God But one day we shall have to eradicate all desires and call on Him What if the body goes while calling on Him ?

“ ‘However great a man may be, whatever great deeds he may be doing, some day he will have to be desireless After that, of course, he may work again through the will of God But if you work at the command of a Mahâpurusha, a man of realization, to whom you have surrendered your all and who seeks your good, work will not tighten your bondage, on the other hand, it will break it Always pray to Him that you may not forget Him Pray ‘Do not give me such work to do, as will make me forget Thee, and wherever Thou keepest me, may I ever remember Thee ’

“ ‘But do not say to Him ‘Give me this’, ‘Do not give me that ’ It will be a selfish prayer When you want to do one

thing and do not want to do another you allow your ego to come in. Some there are, who are afraid of work and try to avoid it. That makes their bondage and selfishness lasting. Pray to Him for Bhakti. But be ever ready to obey His commands. Pray. May I keep Thee in mind under all conditions! May I never fall into any other company than that of Thy devotees! "

4th July

Suami "We must know once for all that everything happens at His will. Many clever persons were born in this world. But what has been their end? Everything comes about and is destroyed at His will. This organization of ours—will this last for ever? No, this also will one day be degraded and then the Lord will have to incarnate again.

"A Brâhmana is a spiritual beggar. He must not provide even for two days. He must be completely absorbed in God.

"The Master used to think meanly of those who lived with women. He used to say that they had no substance in them.

"Those who have not good reasoning powers, become easily biased towards one side. Swamiji had equally the power to

explain and to feel. He knew the defects of people and yet forgave them."

Disciple "Cannot the mind remain alert and awake of itself?"

Suami "But can that state come automatically? You must practise first. Try consciously to correct yourself first, then you will find that your mind has become its own monitor. People want to reach that state at once. The pure portion in you is God Himself. The impure portion is yourself. When you say 'I' you really mean that impure portion. The more you will think of Him, the more He will grow in you, and at last the impure portion will vanish completely.

"There are some who are extremely reserved. They raise high walls around them and do not allow anyone to see their inside. This is very bad. One cannot realize God without being frank and sincere."

7th July

Suami "The more you will free yourself of egotism and become His instrument, the more you will realize peace. The more you will feel that God is the only doer, not you, the more will your heart be filled with peace."

9th July

Swami "At first we also thought Nirvâna to be the highest state of realization. How often the Master rebuked us for this! He used to say that it was a mean conception. I would be amazed to hear him call Nirvana a mean conception."

18th July

Swami Vivekananda's lecture on Vedântism was read. The Swami said

"His words have melted away into the air. With all your renunciation and your learning, what have you been doing? Days are passing, but you are simply vegetating. Who ever feels or says as the Master did at the end of each day, 'O Mother, the day is gone, yet I have not seen Thee! You are damp, spiritless, and inactive. Do you not feel your blood wax hot when you read the words of Swami? 'Who is living-dead? He who is effortless.' You are twenty-seven years old. Swami said that he had achieved everything by his twenty-ninth year.

"But you are not to blame. You do as you see. We are also not working hard enough. We say we are old and diseased. But that is all nonsense and lame excuse. We saw Swami working hard till the end.

During his last illness, he would press a pillow to his chest in order to relieve breathing difficulties, but he would still roar 'Arise! awake! What are you doing?' If the body is to go, let it go working Rousing the Divinity in yourself and in others—that is the ideal

"If you are convinced of its truth, then be up and doing Go out at once Put off everything else Now or never Go to Uttarkâsi and live there by the side of the Ganges and cry to Her saying, 'Mother, I want only Thee, I want nothing else' Prepare the mind even now for living such a life Work and everything else will be considered afterwards "

20th July

Swami "You will have to work your mind yourself Others cannot do that for you The Master has said again and again 'You must try a little Only then will the Guru reveal the Truth' Let me tell you from our experience that if anyone advances towards Him a single step, He advances towards him ten steps This is our personal experience If you do not exert, none can do anything for you

"The Great Ones point out the way Is

that little help? If you tell us your difficulties, we can help you. We also have travelled the same path, so we can tell you about it. Does one want that the butter should be churned out and held before one's lips?—Even then he keeps his mouth shut! Have we to feed him also? This is a mental disease, *Stvâna* (idleness)—the mind refuses to labour or do anything.

“Do you ask, ‘Will not the Lord do anything for His devotee?’ Yes, He will. But you will have to become a devotee first, you must learn to feel devotion for Him. And devotion, *Bhakti*, is no trifling thing. You have to give Him your mind, life, everything. If you cannot do that, then cry to Him for not having attained Him, for not loving Him. People have to shed potsfuls of tears before they can earn money. If you do not do that for God, why should He do anything for you? Little does He care! If you feel miserable for want of Him, know that He is very near to you—you will soon have His vision, you will soon attain infinite bliss.

“You must analyse your mind very carefully. The Master asked me to increase my lust infinitely. I was amazed to hear it. He then explained ‘What is lust?’ It is

the desire to get Then desire to get Him and strengthen this desire greatly '

"Everyone wants to exhibit his good side and conceal his defects Whoever can speak out his own faults frankly, will get rid of them It is not easy to confess one's weaknesses If anyone can, know that he has worth in him

"You must make everyone your own The more you will approach God, the more you will become frank, sincere, and generous Our Master was the very personification of guilelessness and sincerity

"He who has realized the Personal God can also realize the Impersonal, if he so wills But he often retains his 'I' in order to taste the love and bliss of God He also has the knots of his heart sundered and has realized his real nature He does not seek Nirvâna He is no longer afraid of the world He who wants Nirvâna laboriously works his way to the goal, ever anxiously protecting himself against the world But is it not better to be afraid of nothing'

"The Lord of the devotee can be both angry and pleased The Master used to say that he could not bear the sight of egotistic persons Those who go to God without seeking Nirvâna are Isvarakotis "

In course of a letter which the Swami wrote that day to a devotee he observed "If you are miserable for not having realized God, the more this mood grows, the more you will earn His grace Intensify it still more But if your misery is due to other reasons, then carefully shake it off "

29th July

Swami "Why will you not realize Him ' Surely you will Or why have you come here ? Cry to Him—make Him restless Strike your head on the ground till it breaks (in the agony of your soul) Tell Him 'Thou art the Inner Controller Look within me, see if there is anything ' Even to pray to Him thus is something "

30th July

Swami "The Master one day spoke thus about his throat-disease He was asked if he felt the affections in his throat The Master replied 'What foolish things you say ! Does the body ever attain Sâdhuhood ? It is the mind that becomes such ' Unless the mind remains unaffected, a mere Spartan-like fortitude does not count much—you feel the pain, only you suppress its outward expression If you feel that all pains and suffer-

ing are of your body, not your own, and that you are separate from the body, only then are you right

“You must finish all your spiritual practices long before old age and decrepitude overtake you ‘What is the use of digging a well, when the house is already on fire?’”

“Mere suppression of passions helps little. There must be a high ideal along with self-restraint Without a high ideal, the passions will find another outlet You must give them a new direction, then you will be automatically rid of them ‘Take refuge in Me and control the senses’ As for example lust Think that you are His child Why should you be so low as to be lustful? Or think that you are ever pure

“To stand on one’s own legs means to rely on that ‘I’ which comprehends the cosmic ‘I’, not on the ‘I’ which thinks that it is so-and-so and has passed so many examinations etc—to stand on this is of no use.

“Work should be looked upon as a Yajna, a sacrifice The whole work should be done perfectly, even as one would perform a sacrifice Every work should be considered a Sâdhanâ, a means to God-realization Only thus would character be formed ”

Swami S “It is very good to meditate

before sleeping and pass into sleep while thus meditating V— used to have very deep meditation But the moment the Master would touch him, he would wake up looking at him Nityagopal used to pass very often into deep ecstatic states His eyes would roll up and his chest would turn quite red And when he would meditate, all blood would rush to his face and it would look red The Master used to say to him ‘Not so much not so much You must also keep to the common human ways’ ”

Swami “I tell you from my inmost heart, I can this moment go away even as I am now, without caring to look about to see how things are left behind Even now I can live on alms Without this conviction I shall be undone

“Man always seeks advantage He has been doing it not only in this life but also in many previous lives Mukti (emancipation) is nothing but giving up seeking advantage Man wants to avoid suffering, he is always sparing himself Swami used to say that man wants only to gossip

“This (Sannyâsin) life is no fun One must live very cautiously One must be very alert and circumspect One must never retaliate, one must always endure If you retal-

iate, it must rebound on you. It is no child's play. The Sannyâsin's life is an attempt at going beyond all life. He alone will be saved, who will dwell constantly on good thoughts.

20th August

Swami "Meditation begins with the unification of the meditator, the object of meditation, and the act of meditation, when the idea of separation between them is obliterated. When Japa has become automatic, when a portion of the mind ever repeats the Name of itself, one may be said to have advanced a little in Japa. In all cases the 'I' must be forgotten.

"At one time I felt that even every footstep of mine was through His power and that I was nothing. I clearly felt this. This feeling lasted for some days.

"Never expect anything from anyone. But always give. Otherwise a sense of dryness will overtake you. I have seen many Sâdhus who are dry and who think that because they have become Sâdhus they have nothing to do with others. But you must not give your mind to anyone. That you must give only to God. That is why you have not married. Pray crying to Him, 'O Lord, may I love Thee with all my heart.'

The Master would instruct us to work with the hands but to keep the mind ever on Him

“God is not partial His grace is on all, the good and the evil just as rains fall equally on all places Whoever tills the land reaps the harvest If anyone says that he is specially beloved of the Lord, that is his own idea and attitude He says so from the experience of his own life But it is not true

“There is another attitude, according to which God keeps some in bondage and releases others But who can assume this attitude? Only he who has realized everything as one and who feels His mercy even amidst great sorrow

“There is a third attitude Whatever is good is His, and whatever is bad is the result of our own Karma If we continue this attitude, we may eventually get rid of the ego ”

7th September

Swami “The Jnânis meditate in the head, the Bhaktas in the heart We generally find so But when as a result of meditation in the heart, spiritual consciousness expands, there is no more any fixed location of meditation

“The Master had two moods Sometimes he said that he did not like Divine forms not

even Kâli, and his mind would be immersed in the Absolute. At other times, he said that he could not do without Divine forms, and he would say to the Divine Mother that he did not want to see Her formless aspect or have Brahma-jnâna. He who rejects everything and gets lost in the formless Brahman is one-sided. The Jnâni is afraid of rebirth lest he be caught in the meshes of Ignorance. But the expert player is not afraid of anything. Similarly, he who has realized only the forms of God but not His formless absolute aspect, is also one-sided.

“It is said in the Purânas that the Divine forms survive even the dissolution of the entire universe. As the Master used to say, there are places where the ice does not melt.

‘Do not accept any gifts from anyone. For the gifts will harm you, they will take away your independence. He alone can accept, who feels no obligation, whose mind is not affected, who feels them as gifts from God Himself. You may accept gifts only from good men who would not interfere with your independence and seek to control you.

“It is very difficult to truly understand the intricacies of the mind without being an advanced Sâdhaka. How many are the ways in which the mind is deluding us! If anyone

points out the delusions we find excuses for them! We do not understand how many kinds of self-love are in us. It is no joke to submit to anyone—not outwardly, but in spirit.

“Swami Vivekananda was once reading the Bible. He was in those days a vegetarian. When he read of Jesus’s flesh-eating he did not like it. But at once he thought ‘Oh, how proud I have become because I am living on vegetables!’ We read a lot but can feel retain, and assimilate little. Once the Master said to Girish Ch. Ghosh ‘What are you talking of Brahma-jñāna! Sukadeva saw and touched the Ocean of Brahman. And Siva drank only three handfuls of Its water and became a Sava (corpse).’ Girish Ghosh clasped his head and exclaimed ‘Stop, sir, say no more. My head is reeling.’

“Formerly my nerves were very fine, and I had great powers of explaining things. Whenever anyone put me a question, I could see everything from its very origin to its outer expression—I could see from what motive he spoke and why. And there was a flood of light in a single word of mine.

“I used to observe absolute silence during the Navarâtri. I would feel a sort of intoxication and the mind would be one-pointed.

I have done what one being born a man should do. My aim was to make my life pure. I used to read a great deal, eight or nine hours daily. I read many Purânas and then Vedânta and my mind finally settled on Vedânta. The Master said jokingly to me 'Tell me something of Vedânta. Does not Vedânta say that Brahman is true and world false? Or does it say anything else? Then give up the false and take the true.' This was a turning-point in my life."

4th November

Swami "I travelled widely in the early days. I went towards the Narmada, alone, without a pice with me, and I slept anywhere. I went via Allahabad, Chitrakut, Rewa and Jubbulpore, all on foot. Whenever I travelled I kept a place of pilgrimage in view and found out my way by enquiring of people. I went next to Hardwar, Hrîshikesh, Uttarkâsi, etc. I thought of not coming down from the mountains. I lived happily in the Gharwal hills, totally forgot the existence of the world, and aimed only at God-realization. I meditated and read a great deal. But Swamiji made me come down. I met him at Meerut. Some seven or eight of us lived together at Delhi. Then Mahârâj (Swami

Brahmananda) spoke of visiting Jawalpi and asked me to accompany him. So I went with him to Jawalpi, Gopinathpur, Baijnath, Patharkot, Multan, Gujranwala, Montgomery and so on. And then we came down to Bombay via Karachi. At Bombay we met Swami about to embark for America. He said that the Parliament of Religions at Chicago was all for him, as though he saw the future. He asked me to return to the Math and to allow Mahârâj to travel alone.

"I stayed for some time at Mt. Abu. From there I went to Ajmere and Pushkar and then to Brindaban where I stayed for six months. The next six months I passed at Lucknow. Then I went to Ayodhya. At Ayodhya Mahâpurush (Swami Shivananda) met me and asked me to come to the Math.

"Though I travelled much, I also studied much all along. At Brindaban I studied a great deal of Bhakti scriptures. It is not good to wander much if you do not at the same time continue your Sâdhanâ.

"In the Jagannâth temple at Puri, suddenly a sound came to my ears and my heart was filled with a great joy so much so that I felt like walking in the air. The sound continued in various strains. My whole mind felt attracted. I then remember-

ed what I had read of Anâhata Dhvani (music of the spheres as it is called) and I thought it must be that

“At Ujjain, I was one night sleeping under a tree. A storm came and suddenly some one touched me on the body. I got up and at once a branch fell where I had slept.

“When I first read the verse in which it is said that life is meant for the realization of Jivanmukti, I leapt in joy. For that indeed was the purpose of my life.

“‘The first door of Yoga is the control of speech, non-acceptance of gifts, non-expectation, desirelessness and love of solitude.’ This verse had a great influence on me. Formerly I used to talk much. When I read it I thought, ‘What! I have not entered even the first door of Yoga!’ and I resolved that I would control my speech. I did not talk with anyone, lived by myself and acted as I thought best. And I did not utter a single word during the nine days of the Navarâtri.

“It was Sankara who moulded my life. Before I came to the Master, a single verse of Sankara used to lift me a step up and give me a flood of light. In those days I used to find much new meaning in the verses. What is Pangraha (acceptance of gifts)?

Even if you do not accept any gift, there may still be Parigraha. To think of means for the future, that is Parigraha. Birth and rebirth, all follow from Parigraha. We are already thinking of ways and means for the future. Wherever our mind is, there we also are. If you do not have Parigraha, where would your mind be? Naturally on the Atman itself. This one practice of Aparigraha can take you to the highest.

‘Once I was sitting alone by the Ganges after my companions had left. I began to meditate and after some time it struck 2 o’clock. Then someone suddenly said ‘Come, let us go home.’ These words seemed to club me on the head. I understood that they had come from my mind itself. There was really no home. But the mind had been thinking that there was a home where I was to return. I then determined that I would destroy this tendency of the mind.

‘Oh, those days are coming to my mind. While I lived at Srinagar Ghat, I used to rise very early and bathe. Then I would sit in meditation and afterwards read. At eleven, I would rise and procure some food in an hour. Then I would again begin meditation and Japa. And thus every day. It was there that I committed eight Upanishads to

memory I would meditate on every verse I read and what an indescribable joy it was ! I used to read the commentary of Sankara and the gloss of Jnânânanda And much further light used to come through meditation ”

9th October, 1919

Swami Turīyananda was reclining in an easy chair in the verandah of his room. A Brahmachâri was fanning him. The hard austerities practised for years had broken the Swami's health, and diabetes had completed the breakdown. So he had to come to Benares for a change.

The disciple came with C, who after saluting the Swami enquired about his health.

Swami "At present I am doing pretty well. Just after my coming here, I had two successive attacks of influenza, which weakened me much. Fortunately Doctor S who treated me in Calcutta happened to be at Benares on business. On seeing me he remarked that the change at Benares might not prove effective. At that time the symptoms of my old asthma were also evident."

Disciple "You look better than on the Astami Pujâ day when I saw you last. I think it is better that the effect of change is gradual rather than immediate. When

* The Swami was at this time at the Ramakrishna Mission Sevâsrama, Benares

Swami Premananda went to Deoghar he improved much in the beginning But the improvement did not last '

Swami "Yes Perhaps it was wrong to bring him down to Calcutta He had an attack of influenza on the way attended with double pneumonia On his arrival at Calcutta, Swami Saradananda remarked 'He is done for ' He did not die of his previous illness "

C "You well know, Mahârâj, that we are engrossed in the world Pray tell us how we can realize Him "

Swami "There is no fixed means of attaining God Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'A man can be sincere only by virtue of merits acquired in many past lives ' Swami has nicely said, 'God is not a commodity like fish or vegetable to be had for a certain price ' The sages have stated in the Sâstras the several paths by which they attained God One has stated that one should perform Pujâ in such and such a way Another that one should practise Japa And so on Nârada says, 'Just as the river flows intently towards the sea in order to meet it, without deviating its course to any other direction, even so he who seeks God should move towards Him and Him alone

giving up all other concerns ' It is said in the Gîtâ, 'Persons who worship Me alone without being attached to anything else, to them thus ever zealously engaged, I carry what they lack and preserve what they already have '

' There are two forms of Bhakti (devotion) Firstly, the ritualistic or obligatory devotion, such as, one should practise so much Japa or one should perform Puja in such and such a way Then there is the loving devotion At this stage the devotee thinks ardently of God He finds no pleasure in things unrelated to God Above all perseverance is necessary It will not do to discontinue practice if a little effort does not produce the desired effect It is said that a man practised so intensely that an ant-hill grew upon him "

("Mahârâj, what does Japa actually mean ?"

Swami "It means that one should utter His name and at the same time meditate on His form, think of Him and love Him If the mind is attached to worldly things what will the mere repetition of God's name do ? What is essentially wanted is that we must anyhow make Him our own "

Disciple "Just as Sri Ramakrishna has

said, 'You should somehow meet the master of the house, either by fighting with the gate-keeper or by climbing the wall ' "

C "What about those who think, 'I have seen the Master or I have seen the Holy Mother, I need not undergo any spiritual practice' ?"

Swami "How can I say anything about them? They best know their affairs "

Disciple "Perhaps *C* means that there are some who believe that since the Holy Mother has taken their entire responsibility, they need not make any effort themselves. They say that since she is holding them by the hand, they can do whatever they like with the other hand—their salvation is assured '

Swami "He who truly has this faith, has already reached the goal. But is it easy to have that faith? One must beware of self-delusion. Those who have absolute trust in God will be at once purified through His grace, though they might have committed heinous sins before. Just apply a little spark of fire to a mountain-high heap of cotton. The whole mass will be consumed in no time. If you bring light into a room which has been dark for a thousand years, will the darkness go gradually or all at once? "

The Lord says in the Gitâ 'Even if a very wicked man worships Me, with devotion to none else, he should be regarded as good, for he has rightly resolved. Soon he becomes righteous and attains to eternal peace. O son of Kuntî, boldly canst thou proclaim that My devotee is never destroyed.' Even if the greatest villain resigns himself entirely to Him, he must be considered a devotee. And 'soon he becomes righteous.' Through His grace he no longer remains a villain but becomes a pious man. An expert dancer never takes a wrong step. No sin can possibly be committed by him who surrenders himself to God, although he might have committed many misdeeds before. There was no sin which Girish Babu did not indulge in. He once said to us, 'I have drunk so much wine in my life that if the wine-bottles were placed one upon another, they would stand as high as Mount Everest.' He was a poet, so he spoke thus poetically. Really he drank much. When he was asked by the Master to repeat the name of God morning and evening he refused to do so. He said 'I am not sure I can do it. I do not know in what condition or where I may be at those hours.' Then Sri Ramakrishna asked him to remember God before meal-time. 'That also

I cannot promise you,' replied Girish Babu, 'I am often engrossed in law-suits and have to attend to all sorts of things I cannot do even that ' At that Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Then give me the "power of attorney" ' Referring to this, Girish Babu afterwards said to us 'I readily agreed to give him the "power of attorney", but later on I have realized what a difficult task it is to give the "power of attorney ' I had said that I would not be able to repeat the name of God even once in the evening, but afterwards I found that I could not do the least bit of work without remembering Him every moment ' In one day Girish Babu gave up his fifteen years' habit of taking opium He said that the first three days he had to suffer much, his whole body became inert On the fourth day he was all right Later in life he did not even smoke "

C "How to know whether one is progressing towards Him or not?"

Suamī "One can know it oneself Others also can know it All his passions, lust, anger, and greed will wane, his attachment for the objects of the senses will diminish, and he will have peace at heart "

Disciple "Mahârâj, can a man have peace before the realization of God?"

Swami "No, real peace is far off. But if you find that a man's desire for sense-enjoyments is growing less and less and his love is extending over all beings, then you may know that he is progressing towards God. Simply repeating the holy name will not do. If there be a hole of attachment in the mind, the result of Japa will run out through it. A man irrigated his field all day, but in the evening he found that all the water had run out through a hole, not a drop had remained in the field.

"I remember a beautiful saying of Nâg Mahâsaya in this connection. I had been to his house. His father was practising Japa sitting in a corner. Nâg Mahasaya said to me, 'Bless my father that he may have true devotion to God.' 'He has already got it,' I replied, 'he is constantly repeating the name of God. What more do you want?' Nâg Mahâsaya rejoined, 'What is the use of rowing a boat which is at anchor?' My father is much attached to me. What good will his Japa do?' 'If he is not to love a son like you, whom else should he love?' said I. 'Don't say so, don't say so,' he cried out, 'only bless that he may lose all attachment for me.'

"Oh, what a great man Nâg Mahâsaya

was ' Do you know the full meaning of 'rowing a boat at anchor?' One dark night several drunkards took it into their heads to have a boat-trip They went to the river, got into a boat and at once began to row When it was dawn they found that they were at the very place from which they had started They were so intoxicated that they forgot to weigh the anchor !''

12th October

The Swami was sitting in his room A few Sannyâsins and lay devotees were present A conversation was going on on Sir John Woodroffe's *Is India Civilised ?*, the second edition of which had come out much enlarged

Disciple "There is an advantage in writing work You can make steady progress If you write one hour every day, you will find at the end of the year that much has been written But with spiritual practice the case is different You may practise meditation and Japa two or three hours a day and continue it for ten long years, yet you won't notice any appreciable progress It is as though you are just where you were in the beginning "

Swami "What do you say? Who says that spiritual practice produces no effect?

Surely it does There is not a shade of doubt about it

"People of the world give you wages, if you work for them Is God so unkind that He will not requite the works done for Him? But you must work in the right spirit Working haphazardly will not do A mad man lived near a distillery Every noon he would go where the rejected earthen pots used in distilling wine were thrown and break them one by one with a stick, and perspiring profusely he would cry out, 'Oh, I can work no more' He would then take a little rest and begin again'

"It will not do if you toil this way You may irrigate the field all day, but it would be all in vain if there be a hole in the field When you go to the field in the evening, you will find that not a drop of water has remained in the field, all has run out through the hole Attachment to sense-objects is the hole "

Disciple "What shall we do, Mahârâj, if we cannot find out the hole? It all depends on the grace of the Guru Sri Ramakrishna has said, 'If anyone intending to make a pilgrimage to the temple of Jagannâth travels in a wrong direction through mistake, some-one will surely point him out the right direc-

tion sooner or later ' A seeker of God may adopt a wrong course, but it is certain that his object is the attainment of God Why then should his labours prove fruitless ?''

Suami "No, they would not, if he really be in quest of God Such a man is sure to receive a glimpse of His grace some day 'If anyone advances one step towards God, He comes nearer by ten steps ' This is no idle talk Whoever has made even a little effort to earn His grace has realized this (*Turning to A*) What do you say ?''

A "Yes, sir Certainly He does "

Suami " 'Truthfulness, obedience, and looking upon all women as mother, if these do not lead one to Hari, then Tulsî is responsible for it '¹ Few, alas, speak the truth What is obedience ? It is complete resignation And one must look upon another's wife as one's mother Whoever will have these, will reach God , Tulsî stands surety for it

" 'He who constantly steals others' property may perform great charities, still he does none He who always depends on others, may live long, yet he lives not He who always slanders others may repeat the holy name, yet he does it not,' so said Kabîr

¹ A couplet of Tulsîdâs, the great devotee of Sri Râma

"What will it avail if one makes charity with money stolen from others? To live long on the charity of others is as good as death. It is useless for a slanderer to repeat the name of God. This is why Jesus said 'Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.' "

Disciple "It is pleasant to hear all this Mahârâj. But it costs one's life to carry them out. Theoretically it is easy to understand them, but to practise them is extremely difficult."

Swami "But even an intellectual grasp is not nothing. It is possible only in this country. A great many souls were born here who realized Brahman, and the influence of their experiences has entered into the very marrow of the country. That is why men and women, old and young, all can easily understand these truths."

A "No other nation has perhaps been able to realize the personal and the impersonal aspects of God at the same time."

Swami "No. Only the Rishis (seers) of this country realized the Nirguna Brahman

One Mussulman is said to have attained the consciousness, 'I am Brahman, I am He' But when he declared this, the Mollahs were much enraged with him They being the descendants of Ali were the priests of the Mohammedans They were all dualists Once the emperor's daughter fell dangerously ill No physician could cure her Then someone suggested that that saint should be called in 'He possesses wonderful powers,' he said, 'surely he can cure her' So he was called in He said to the emperor's daughter 'In the name of God, I declare you cured Therefore get up' But the words produced no effect Then he exclaimed 'I say that you are cured Therefore get up' And she got up at once cured The emperor was highly pleased But the Mollahs cried out, 'Did you see how he said he was more powerful than Allah?' He was therefore put on trial and flayed alive In that terrible state he went from door to door begging for food But all closed their doors against him Only a butcher threw a bit of flesh to him and shut the door Next he begged for fire to roast the meat, but was refused by all Then he held it towards the sun and the sun in order to give

more heat came lower down So it is said that the sun is much nearer at Multan ”

A Brahmachâr “When did it happen ”

Swami “About the fifteenth century ’

Brahmachâr “Jesus also said, ‘I and my father are one ’ ”

Swami “He answered very carefully in the court ‘Art thou the king of the Jews ’ ‘Thou sayst it,’ he answered The priests were all enraged with him because of his powers, for his influence affected their income as people obeyed him implicitly Jesus said, ‘Come ye after me, and I will make ye to become fishers of men ’ And at once Simon and his brother forsook their nets and followed him One of his disciples came and said, ‘Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father ’ But Jesus said to him, ‘Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead ’ When the priests saw that he was bringing about their ruin they sued him in the court But the governor found no guilt in him He was ready to release him But the multitudes insisted on his being sentenced to death, so he delivered him up to them to be crucified, saying, ‘I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it ’ ”

Disciple “The faithful disciples of Jesus

thought that the Heavenly Father would actually come down and establish His Kingdom on earth ”

Swami “Why? He said to them, ‘The Kingdom of God is within you ’ ”

Disciple “Of the Christian saints how wonderful was the life of Saint Francis of Assisi !”

Swami “Yes He meditated on Jesus so intensely that he got stigmata in his hands and feet He bore these marks till death ”

Disciple “In Islam also many great saints have been born ”

Swami “Yes, certainly It is because such great souls are born in every religion and realize the Truth that these religions live through ages

‘ Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) used to say, ‘All come and say, “Tell us the way, tell us the way,” but none would follow any ’

“It is wrong to say that even when one calls on the Lord earnestly, one does not find Him There was a boy who called Him as Brother Madhusudana What was his name ?”

Disciple “Jatila ”

Swami “Yes, yes, Jatila He was rather afraid to go to school all alone through a

wood His mother said 'You have a brother, Madhusudana Call Him and you will have no fear' The boy was convinced that Madhusudana was his real brother. Whenever he felt frightened in the forest he called his brother Madhusudana and he came and escorted him When the schoolmaster learnt this, he said to him 'Can you show me your brother?' 'Why not?' replied the boy They went to the forest As the boy called, Madhusudana came But the teacher could not see Him, he only heard the sound of His anklets Even this was not vouchsafed to the mother She gave the instruction only to dispel her son's fear, but herself had no faith in it

"Do you know the story of the milkmaid crossing the ocean of life? A milkmaid supplied milk to the house of a Brahmana Pandit She had to cross a river on the way. As the ferry-boat could not be found at the right time every day, she was very late now and then in her supply of milk and the Pandit's children had to suffer much So he severely scolded her one day 'What shall I do, sir,' replied the milkmaid, 'I do not find the ferry-boat in right time every day, so I am delayed' The learned Pandit said

at once 'Oh, you cannot cross this small river?' How will you then cross the ocean of life?' The illiterate milkmaid had not even heard the phrase 'the ocean of life' She stood dumb-founded Then the Pandit explained to her that by taking God's name one could easily cross the ocean of life, what to speak of this little river The milkmaid was much delighted and went away

"Thenceforth she supplied milk at the right time She was never late One day the Pandit said to her 'Now I see you come every day at the proper time How do you cross the river?' 'Why, sir' It is you who kindly told me the means Now I have not to wait for the ferry-boat, nor have I to pay the boatman' 'What do you mean? Who then takes you across the river?' 'Nobody has to help me, sir I come straight down to the river, repeat the name of Hari and walk across the waters' 'Can you show me how you do it?' 'Why not, sir? Come along' The Pandit could not believe it He followed the milkmaid in suspense The milkmaid went close to the river, repeated the name of Hari and walked across the river, as if there was no more than knee-deep water in it As she reached the other side, she turned back and

saw the Pandit standing wonder-struck on the other side. She cried out, 'How is it? Why are you standing there, sir? Repeat the name of Hari and come along.' The Pandit was startled, and spell-bound he walked across the river uttering the name of Hari. But as the water became deeper and deeper, he raised his clothes with both hands. He had no faith at heart, though his lips uttered the name of God. Finding the Pandit in such a plight, the milkmaid said, 'Oh, you repeat the name of Hari and at the same time raise your clothes? That will not do, sir.'

"A little self-examination will make everything clear. Lately I witnessed a strange fight within my body. During my recent illness, I was reduced to a skeleton. This muscle that you see now (*touching the calf muscle*), was all gone. All this grew anew afterwards."

Disciple "Do you mean the influenza you suffered from last time?"

Suami "No. It was at Puri. Then there was nothing in the body except bone and skin. I could neither turn over sides nor move my limbs. Only the power of speech was left to me. One day I saw that the life within the body was engaged in a severe struggle with another from the outside.

The struggle was severe and lasted for a long time. They were at close grips with each other, and now the one and now the other seemed to win. The external one was struggling to snatch away the life from the body, but the life would not go. At last the outer one was defeated and went away. So life remained. Had it been defeated, it would have gone away with the other one, and the body would have remained lifeless, that is, I would have died. I was watching the battle in wonder from a distance as it were. As soon as the outer one went away defeated, I said to those who were about me, 'This time I am saved, I won't die.' Then all this flesh grew anew. Before or after this incident, I do not exactly remember when, Swamiji (Vivekananda) appeared to me and said at once 'What is this? Get up.' "

13th October

The Swami was talking to a group of Sannyâsins and Brahmachârins who had come to his room.

Swami (Turning to one of the assembled monks) "Do you believe in the existence of God? (The monk remained silent) I once felt this atheistic mood."

Monk "Yes, Mahâraj, sometimes I too feel that there is no God "

Suami "So my confession encourages you to speak out ! Perhaps you thought at first that if you spoke out, you would be exposed ? That is not so Such a sceptical mood comes upon many This is a stage on the way to God Once the reading of a book made me atheistic "

A Brahmachârin "Was the author a European ?"

Suami "Yes What a terrible agony I then passed through ! Nothing could give me peace This mood lasted only a day or two The book was full of materialistic ideas After a hard struggle I got over its influence

"A also had to pass through such a state He was an out and out Vedântist, you know It is said in the Gîtâ 'He who takes the Self to be the slayer, he who takes It to be the slain, neither of these knows It does not slay, nor is It slain ' A was very much impressed by this idea One day the Master sent for him, and when he came, said to him, 'Can you kill a man ?' 'Why not, sir ? I can easily,' replied A 'Will not the sense of sin prick your conscience ?' 'Why ? Who kills whom ?' 'All right Go ahead This is also a stage—just as we enter one room

through another But you must not stop here If you do, you will be ruined Beware you do not become a householder with such an attitude of mind '

"It is very difficult to realize God The slightest desire blocks the way The Master often said, 'The thread does not pass through the eye of a needle, if even the minutest fibre sticks out ' Swamiji (Vivekananda) once said to him, 'Kindly pray to the Mother that they (Swamiji's relations) may have a bare subsistence ' The Master sent him to the temple to beg of the Mother But when Swamiji entered the temple, he could not beg anything but Viveka (discrimination) and Vairâgya (dispassionateness) How could he? He had no attachment within When he said this to the Master, the Master remarked to us 'Do you see what a great soul he is? He could not ask of the Mother anything but Viveka and Vairâgya ' "

14th October

The Swami was sitting in his room Some Sannyâsins and Brahmachârins were present

Swami "See how my skin has shrivelled This is a sign of old age King Yayâti also had the same experience One day all of a

sudden his skin shivelled, his hair turned grey and his body became decrepit

“To be successful in any work you must look upon the work itself as your ideal. You may have a fancy for a work for a day or two and then give it up as soon as it loses charm. This is no good. Sasi Mahâraj (Swami Ramakrishnananda) demonstrated in his life how to work. For sixteen years he followed the same routine in the same place. Sometimes his sufferings became so intense that he abused Sri Ramakrishna and Swami in the strongest language. Still he did not give up the work entrusted to him.”

A “Swami, I was once asked which of the four, Jnâna, Bhakti, Karma, and Yoga, was the greatest. ‘Don’t bother yourself about that,’ replied Swami. ‘Take up any of them you like and follow it as best as you may.’”

Swami “Work for work’s sake. Your whole mind should be fixed upon the work. Let that be your ideal, the be-all and end-all of life. Never mind success or failure.”

15th October

The Swami was sitting in his room with a few Sannyâsins and Brahmachârins. He was

not feeling well The conversation turned on milk

Suami "Once Upamanyu had a desire to drink milk. He had just returned from his aunt's place where he had tasted milk. He urged his mother to give him milk. She was a poor widow and could not afford milk for her son. But as he still insisted, she mixed powdered rice with water and gave him that as milk. Upamanyu found that it did not taste like the stuff he had taken at his aunt's house. 'This is milk,' said the mother. But he would not believe. Then she began to cry. 'I am a poor woman,' she said, 'where shall I get milk, my child?' Siva is the giver of wealth. If you can satisfy him by your prayers and austerities, he may grant you the boon of abundant milk.' Upamanyu practised hard austerities until Mahâdeva appeared to him and gave him the desired boon. But that was not the only Tapasyâ he practised in his life. He is one of the great sages celebrated in the Mahâbhârata.

"Of Sri Krishna's wives at Dwaraka, Jâmbavatî had no son. One day she thus expressed her sorrow to Sri Krishna. 'Through your grace all have been favoured with sons except the unfortunate me who

have none. Kindly bless me with a son. Sri Krishna deliberated awhile and then went away from Dwaraka to become a disciple of Upamanyu. He was initiated by Upamanyu and practised hard Tapasvâ under his guidance to gratify Siva. Then through Siva's grace, Jâmbavatî gave birth to a son who came to be known as Samba. You see even Sri Krishna had to worship Siva for a son. In the Mahâbhârata there are many references to the cult of Siva. Therefore Swami Vivekananda used to say 'Siva is the God of the Mahâbhârata and not Sri Krishna.'

"I do not like buffalo's milk. It increases fat. Cow's milk is the best. Yudhisthira was fond of cow's milk from childhood, and Duryodhana of buffalo's milk, and you see the difference in their nature.

"It is very wrong to waste a thing, however insignificant. Do you know how the Master rebuked one of us for cutting a lemon too deep? If any rice were left on the plate after meal, Sâsi Mahârâj used to be much annoyed."

K. "Yes, Mahârâj. If anybody said that such rice could be given to dogs, he would be offended and would say, 'What! the food cooked for God should be given to dogs!'"

M came in and sat down after saluting the Swami

Swami "How are you?"

M "Quite well Mahâraj There is no place like Benares I did not know much about its greatness before But the reading of the *Kîshi-Khanda* has opened my eyes"

K "Yes, there is no place like Benares If anyone lives here, his mind naturally becomes quiet and settles at the feet of Viswanâth From 3 o'clock in the morning, people here go about crying, 'Lord Viswanâth!'"

Swami "Yes, to live here is in itself a spiritual discipline One has daily to take bath in the Ganges and visit the temple of Viswanâth But I cannot unfortunately go and worship Viswanâth on account of a pain in the leg I had been to the temple only once"

M "The daily visit to the temple has created such a tendency in me that I feel very unhappy if I miss it a single day"

Disciple "Unlucky as I am, I never feel like that When I go to the temple, I only see a block of stone and nothing else I never feel any attraction like yours"

Swami "Ah, what do you say? All feel like M How is it that you do not?"

Disciple "It is no use saying that I feel when I really do not. From time immemorial, men and women have been coming to Benares to visit Viswanâth. There must be some meaning in that, I know. Yet I myself do not feel any attraction."

Swami "If a person cannot weep tears of devotion, he can do so by applying oil and chilli powder to his eyes. One actually did so at the time of Sri Chaitanya. When Sri Chaitanya held Kirtana¹ in the house of Sri-vâsa, everyone shed tears through devotion. But there was one who could not. This made him very sad. So one day he applied chilli powder in his eyes at the time of Kirtana and thus shed tears. When Sri Chaitanya came to know of it, he ran up to him and embraced him. He thought that the man must have great devotion, otherwise he would not have been so grieved for not being able to weep."

K "He (disciple) speaks sincerely. I am sure he also is miserable for not feeling drawn to Viswanâth."

Swami "You will feel it, you will feel it. Through His grace, the feeling will come of itself."

¹ Congregational devotional music

16th October

The Swami was reading a letter written to him from Rangoon by Brahmachari K. It said that relief centres had been opened for the flood and famine-stricken people there and that nearly a thousand rupees were being spent every month. Besides, 400 maunds of rice given by a kind-hearted gentleman were being distributed. K had to direct the whole work with the help of a worker. The relief extended over an area of 100 square miles, and people living even 16 or 17 miles away received help.

Swami "K regrets that he whose grace has made it possible for him to do all this, is not here to see this in the material body. He speaks of Swami Premananda. It is he who attracted him to this life. It is well written by K, 'he is not seeing this in the material body,' that is, he is seeing, but not in the material body. Do you know anything of K's former life? He is a great worker. He is conducting such a big work alone."

Disciple "He can work very hard. I have noted that whenever any work is started, there is no lack of money through His grace. We have only to collect it. Unfortunately there are few to do even this.

Wherever I have gone, I have found that it is not money that is wanting, but men '

Suami "Yes The Kankhal Sevâsrama was started in a rented house with only Rs 150 in hand The permanent site was secured afterwards The workers were known to a Sâdhu much respected by a rich merchant Once when the merchant visited the Sâdhu, he let fall some hints to the merchant to help the Sevâsrama Accordingly he went there one day and came to know that a pucca house was required to prevent the mischief of the monkeys which entered the huts in which the Sevâsrama was then housed and destroyed the medicines He asked for an estimate and went away This was however delayed So he came another day and asked them to hurry it He said I am a householder I am now disposed to do charity But when I return home, my mind may change Then it would be difficult for me to give anything ' Thus the dispensary building and the residence of the workers were built at a cost of Rs 6,000

"A Judge used to supply foodstuff worth Rs 15 every month to the Kankhal Sevâsrama Someone spoke to him against the Sevâsrama One day he paid a surprise

visit and was much impressed with the care and attention with which the patients were being treated and nursed by the Sâdhus. He found one of the monks cleaning a deadly ulcer of a patient. He then gave out the object of his visit and said, 'I am convinced by what I have seen that you are indeed blessed and my gift is also blessed.'

"The Sevâsrama is situated in a nice place. Opposite to it, on the other side of the canal, is Rishikesh. Here at Benares, K. and others started the Sevâsrama with only a four-anna bit.'

1st July, 1920

The talk was about Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa.

Swami "Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa appealed to the Divine Mother saying, 'Mother, if lust overtakes me, I shall commit suicide' What lofty words ! Once he felt as if he had a premonition of it. In great alarm he ran at once and threw himself at the feet of the Mother. His mentality was such that he would surely have carried out his words if he felt any lust—he was extremely true to his words ! And rest assured, Mother never allows such propensities to come unto one who can speak like that. If one can have such determination, he surely reaches the goal. "कामादिदोषरहितं कुरु मानवश्च"—'Make the mind free from lust and such other desires'—What a beautiful sentiment !¹

"Isn't it terrible to be overcome by lust in old age ? They say that such desires are stronger in old age. The impulse is there but the senses lack in power—isn't it a great

* Swami was at this time at the Rāmakṛṣṇa Mission Sevāśrama, Benares

¹ Tulsidās

torment." Besides one loses much of one's controlling power then

"Well, what is this lust? Isn't it merely a function of the mind?"

Some One "It is evidently a sense-pleasure"

I am "There must be a psychology behind it, and what is that? It is the desire to attain oneness. Lust also is an aspect of that Love. But men take a wrong course. They begin with the gross, hence their failure to carry it up to that Pure Substance, God. Some, however, have attained realization even through this as for instance Chandidâs. You have heard of him, I dare say? "A washerwoman, but the image of the youthful Râdhâ, with no taint of lust in her. 'With no taint of lust in her'—what an idea! You have heard also of Bilvamangal, and of Tulsidas. Tulsidâs was henpecked. His wife was going to her father's house and Tulsidâs followed her. Disgusted at this, the wife remarked, 'If you can bestow ever a grain of this love on the

¹ One of the fathers of Bengali poetry. He was a follower of that school of Vaishnava Sâdhanâ in which clandestine love is idealized and sublimated by meditation into pure love, culminating in Realization.

² Thus Chandidâs speaks of his beloved

Lord you will soon realize Him ' At once his power or discrimination was roused. Men of this stamp are roused up by such trifling causes. Love and lust are two things very much allied. Hence Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'Lust is blind, but love is pure and resplendent ' It is lust if you have the idea of man, and love if you have the idea of God in your beloved "

Some One 'Well, the Gopis had no idea of God at the outset they started with attachment for the gross. Didn't they '"

Swami "Not so. In the Bhagavata we find in the supplication of the Gopis that they had the idea of God in Sri Krishna from the very beginning. When the Gopis approached Him and He asked them to go away, they said, 'We have come to Thee leaving our husband, father, children, relatives, friends and everything. And where is the place to go to? Are you not inside everything as the Inner Self?'

"The Gopis attained perfect concentration on Sri Krishna. If there is concentration on any single object, there the idea of God manifests itself. Lust, anger, fear, affection—any of these may bring about concentration. Lust—as in the case of the Gopis, anger—as with Kamsa, fear—as in the

case of Sisupâla, affection—as with Mother Yasodâ, and so on ”

काम क्रोध भय स्नेहमेव सौहृदमेव च ।

नित्यं ह्येवं विदधतो यान्ति तन्मयता हि ते ॥

“ ‘Lust, anger, fear, affection, amity, and friendship—those who always cherish any of these feelings towards God, assuredly attain to concentration on Him ’¹ But can such things happen unless the mind is absolutely pure ? Never think of it !

“ ‘If there is love, there must also be an object of that love. It never happens that there is hunger, but no food to satisfy it ’ ”

2nd July

The Swami opened the conversation addressing a monk of the Order who had been conducting a Vedânta class

Swami “You had the Vedânta class today ?”

A “Yes, sir ”

Swami “What was the topic ? तत्तु समन्वयात् —‘That Brahman (from which the origin, subsistence and dissolution of this world proceed) is to be known from the scriptures alone, for It is the main purport of all Vedânta texts ’ ”²

Bhâgavata 10 19 15

Vedânta Sûtras I 1 4

1 “Yes, sir We had the discussion about ‘changelessly eternal’ and ‘absolutely eternal’ ”

Saami “The very expression ‘changelessly eternal’ sounds like ‘hot ice’ It is, I think, the Sâmkhya view Prakriti consists of the three Gunas—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas (balance, activity, and inertia) It is these which undergoing modification lead to creation Dr S one day asked me this very question He said, ‘The three Gunas make up Prakriti So, if the Gunas undergo modification, does not Prakriti verily cease to be itself?’ I replied, ‘The whole of Prakriti is not of course undergoing modification, but only a portion of it There is Prakriti, and there is also the modified Prakriti As for instance, when milk is coagulated into curd somewhere, all the milk in the world does not turn into curd—there is yet milk somewhere Vedânta describes the Purusha and Prakriti as identical (*Pointing to his own body*) Even here don’t you find both Prakriti and Purusha¹ existing together?’

“Even in a single grain there are two halves

¹ As ‘Kshetra’ and ‘Kshetrajna’ The body and mind are changing but the Self always remains unaffected by the changes

पुरुषो प्रकृतिस्थो हि भुक्ते प्रकृतिजान् गुणान् ।

कारणं गुणसंगोऽस्य सदसद्योनिजन्मसु ॥

“ ‘The Purusha resting on Prakriti experiences the attributes that spring from the latter. The attachment for the Gunas is the cause of the soul’s being born in higher and lower bodies’¹

उ एव वेत्ति पुरुष प्रकृति च गुणै सह ।

सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि न स भूयोऽभिजायते ॥

“ ‘He who thus knows the Purusha and the Prakriti together with its Gunas, is never subject to rebirth, howsoever he may live’²

“Well, what is spiritual practice but purifying this Prakriti? The Vaishnavas say, Krishna alone is Purusha, all else is Prakriti.³

¹ Gita 13 21

² *Ibid*, 13 23

³ The terms Purusha and Prakriti, in Sâmkhya philosophy, mean the soul and Nature which, in its broad sense, is the material cause of the universe. Purusha is intelligent, unchanging, eternal, and infinite in number, and experiences happiness and misery etc through falsely identifying itself with Prakriti which is insentient, ever-changing, and eternal, and contributes to the experience of the Purusha. Both are independent. In the culmination of its experience the Purusha knows that it is eternally aloof from Prakriti. This is Kaivalya or Liberation.

The words Purusha and Prakriti have also got a second meaning—male and female

SRI Chaitanya used to say, 'Being a Prakṛiti why should one accost another Prakṛiti?'¹ Does Prakṛiti ever court Prakṛiti? We must have Prakṛiti attached to Puruṣa Mīrā Bāi, when she went to Brindāban, wanted to see Sanātana,² but the latter refused to grant her an interview on the ground that she was a woman. He was, you know, a man of great renunciation. Thereupon Mīrā replied, 'At Brindāban I know of only one Puruṣa, and he is Śrī Kṛishna. And who is this second man that has come? Well, I must see him!' Then they met. Both were advanced souls, so they were in raptures. Sanātana saluted Mīrā with the words 'She through whom Śrī Kṛishna manifests His divine sport, and from whom I have been born.'

"It is almost useless to read Vedānta unless one compares notes with one's own experience."

¹ The words quoted form a part of Śrī Chaitanya's rebuke to one of his disciples, Haridās (junior) who happened to beg some rice for his master from a distinguished old lady devotee.

² A great Vaishnava saint—a disciple of Śrī Chaitanya. He was formerly the minister of the Nawab of Bengal, but had renounced everything for the sake of the Lord.

A young man hailing from East Bengal came and saluted the Swami. He had received initiation and Brahmacharya from a highly spiritual man of that part and had been practising Sâdhanâ for the last eleven years. He had recently come to Benares with the object of spending his days in Sâdhanâ and holy company.

Swami (To the new-comer) "There are signs of Vairâgya (dispassionateness) visible on your person. Well, what sort of Vairâgya do you feel? Is it real Vairâgya or Vairâgya from some exciting cause? If it be due to some temporary cause, Vairâgya disappears as soon as the cause ceases to exist. Were you interned?"

The youth "No, sir."

Swami "Anyway, it is good fortune to have this feeling of Vairâgya. And what is Vairâgya but the discrimination between the Self and the non-Self? 'Discrimination between Purusha and Prakriti' is another name for it."

Asked whether he intended to stay on at Benares, the youth replied that if circumstances were favourable he would like to do so.

Swami "If one lives a good, moral life, one can live in any country, not to speak of

India 'The whole earth is the Lord's, where is there any obstruction (Atak)¹ in it for anybody? He only who has scruples in his mind meets with obstructions outside'

"This is the saying of a very great man Do you know him? It was uttered by Hari Singh, the general of Ranjit Singh. The Afghans began to create disturbances on the frontier, and when chased they would retreat and halt just beyond Attock. It became quite a problem to control them, as going beyond Attock meant losing one's religion. Then Hari Singh was called in and being asked his advice in this crisis, he uttered those words. He crossed Attock and taught the intruders a sound lesson. Hari Singh was a Vaishnava, but how like a Jnâni he spoke! Being good and moral you may live anywhere you like—you will live happily. Well, He alone is the Real—the Good, there is nothing beside Him which is real or good.

"Let me tell you a short story. While Râma and Lakshmana were wandering in the Dandaka forest after Sitâ had been stolen, they saw a delightful place. Wishing to

¹ There is a pun on the word 'Atak' in the original Hindi verse which means both 'obstruction' and the town Attock in the Punjab.

spend the four months of the rainy season there, Râma said to Lakshmana, 'Brother just go and look if there is anybody about Without the owner's permission how can we stay here?' Lakshmana searching hither and thither in the forest came across a Siva temple, but found no trace of men On his coming back and reporting the matter to Rama, the latter said, 'It is excellent, Siva is the presiding deity of the place Go and get His permission' In pursuance of the order Lakshmana went to the temple and asked for the permission, when there emerged from the image of Siva a radiant being who went on dancing for some minutes in a wonderful posture, and then disappeared Lakshmana, unable to make any meaning out of it, came back bewildered and reported all that had happened Hearing it Râma said, 'Build the hut We have got the permission' 'How is that?' asked Lakshmana Râma replied, 'Keeping the palate and the sexual instinct under control, you may live happily not only here, but anywhere you like'

पृथिव्या यानि भूतानि जिह्वीपस्थनिमित्तकम् ।

जिह्वीपस्थपरित्यागे पृथिव्या किं प्रयोजनम् ॥

“ ‘Every creature on earth seeks the satisfaction of the palate and the sexual instinct.

To one who gives up the craving for these of what avail is anything in this world?"

"Well, the whole trouble is due to these—the palate and the sexual instinct. In the Himalayas there are lots of solitary places suited for spiritual practices, but why can't Sâdhus live there? Owing to the urge of the tongue. The craving for delicacies drives them out of those places. And why is it that Sâdhus cannot live in peace at one place? Either they have a rude tongue and quarrel with others, or they hanker after dainty dishes, or it is the sexual instinct. Hence if a Sâdhu can live at a place peacefully for twelve years, he is said to have 'perfected his seat'. A twelve years' restraint is not a joke!

"Perfect mastery over the sex impulse is very difficult. 'The woman will die and her ashes be blown to the winds then only may one sing her praises'¹ There is a story about it. One day Emperor Akbar said to his minister Birbal, 'Go and enquire of your mother if she has got rid of passion.' The lady was then over eighty years of age. Besides, how could Birbal ask his mother such a question? Yet that was the

¹ A Bengali proverb

Emperor's mandate Birbal was in a fix and gave up food and sleep in his anxiety. His mother was a very wise old lady—she was Birbal's mother, you must remember—and she guessed it all. She said to her son 'Don't you worry, my boy. Have your food and take some rest. When you go to the Durbar, take from me the answer.' When it was time for him to go to the Court, Birbal's mother gave her son a device of 'Twenty boxes,'¹ with instructions to hand it over to the Emperor. On receipt of the box the Emperor opened it. There were numerous boxes one within the other, all empty. Only in the inmost one he found a little ashes! The point of the answer is clear enough.

"All trouble is over if the palate and sex impulse are conquered. When Sri Chaitanya went to Kesava Bhârati for initiation into Sannyasa the latter remarked, 'You are in the bloom of youth and so surpassingly handsome. Who will be bold enough to initiate you into Sannyâsa?'" Sri Chaitanya replied, 'Sir, you usually examine an aspirant before conferring Sannyâsa on him. If you find me qualified, you will naturally be

¹ A toy common in places like Benares. The inmost box is sometimes of the size of a pea.

inclined to initiate me also. So please examine me and see if I am fit for it.' Bhârati said to Sri Chaitanya, 'Put out your tongue.' On the disciple's putting out his tongue, the Guru put some sugar on it. The sugar was left as it was, without being moistened in the least, and was scattered in the air the moment it was blown out. There was no more need to examine the sexual instinct.

तावज्जितेन्द्रियो न स्याद्विजितान्धेन्द्रिय पुमान् ।

न जयेद्भसनं यावज्जितं सर्वं जितं रमे ॥

" 'A man who has controlled all other senses except the palate is not to be considered a master of his senses. When the hankering of the palate is controlled everything else is controlled.'¹

"When the palate is controlled the sex impulse is also controlled. Unless the senses are brought under control there cannot be any spiritual progress. Throughout the Gîtâ there is repeated mention of this. 'Therefore, O best of the Bhâratas, control thou the senses first, and thereby kill this sinful propensity of lust, which destroys one's Knowledge and Realization.'

¹ Bhâgavata, 11.8.21

“Even if a single organ remains uncontrolled all austerities, all efforts after spirituality become useless even as when there is a single hole in a pitcher, all the water escapes through that. You know that parable of Sri Ramakrishna, of the peasant irrigating his field. All the water escaped through a subterranean passage and not a drop of water reached the field !

इन्द्रियाणां हि सर्वेषां यद्येकं चरतीन्द्रियम् ।

तदस्य चरति प्रज्ञा दृते पाप्मादिवोदकम् ॥

“ ‘Even if a single organ is allowed to run out, that alone destroys the aspirant’s illumination, like water from a cracked leathern jar ’¹

“रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते— ‘Even the craving for sense-objects leaves an aspirant when he realizes the Lord ’ Control of the senses is not to be brought about by a violent effort. Only by realizing Him is it perfectly achieved. But at first one must struggle for this end. Afterwards it becomes quite natural. Still one should not be over-confident. Just as the intelligent hunter catches a deer and ties it up, so after succeeding in controlling the organs one should be alert,

¹ Manu, 2 99

and continue to hold the mind and organs in check

“(Pointing to the young visitor) He appears to be a lad who is practising Sâdhanâs. Don’t you all detect this? I see it quite clearly. One test of the steadiness of mind is the steadiness of look. As soon as the mind gets steady the look also gets steady. No more is there any restiveness in one’s looks and movements.

“(To the youth, smiling) What do you want? You don’t want powers, I hope?”

“(To others) All’s well that ends well. It is very difficult to hold on to the last Powers sometimes come of themselves to the spiritual aspirant, but the moment he cares for them he is gone—his further progress is stopped. These powers, again, do not last. Not to speak of using them for selfish purposes, even using them for other ends means losing them. A man set out from home in search of the gems of the sea. When he came to the sea-shore he found variously coloured pebbles and shells scattered there and he set himself to fill his pockets with these—he forgot all about the gems in the sea. The Divine Mother deludes all so as to make them forget their ideal. In the Kathopanishad Yama says to Nachiketas

“ ‘These damsels, with chariots and musical instruments, are never accessible to men I give them to you Have them attend on you, but don't ask me about what comes after death, O Nachiketas ’ And see what Nachiketas replies ‘O Death, all these are but transient and they weaken the vigour of the senses of mortals Even the biggest span of life is but short So let these chariots and music and all remain with thee A man is not to be satisfied with riches, and when we have met thee, we shall have riches enough, and live too, as long as thou wilt rule So I crave that very boon and nothing else ’

“Just as Yama is trying to delude Nachiketas so the Divine Mother is deluding all What is there in these powers? Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘It is priding oneself upon others’ things, as the washerman does ’ What matter these to you? They all belong to the Lord only He is making them pass through you, that’s all The case is analogous to Sri Ramakrishna’s parable¹ of the

¹ A spiritual aspirant acquired some supernatural powers which made him proud But he was a sincere man So the Lord came to him in the form of a Brâhmana and praising his powers wanted to have some test An elephant was passing by The man, gratified by the request, took some dust and uttering some Mantras threw

elephant killed and brought back to life (*To the young man*) No, no, one must not have leanings that way. We want Bhakti. If one has but Bhakti, what else is needed? Nârada was once undergoing great austerities when he heard a voice from heaven

अन्तर्बहिर्यदि हरिस्तपसा तत किम् ।

नान्तबहिपदि हरिस्तपसा तत किम् ॥ etc

“ ‘If the Lord is ever present inside and outside, then with what object should you undergo austerities, subjecting the body to various hardships? And if He be not inside and outside, of what avail are these austerities?’ In other words, we must go through them, betaking ourselves to God. In our country, however, there is now a sad dearth of austerities. One no more hears nowadays of rigid austerities as of old. Well, this is the result of undigested Vedânta. Is it possible to understand the truths of Vedânta without undergoing austerities? Vichâr-

it on the elephant, which immediately fell down dead. Then the Brâhmana wished to see if he could bring it to life again. This also the aspirant accomplished in a similar way. After witnessing all these the Brâhmana said, “Well, sir, the elephant died and then revived. But of what spiritual gain have these powers been to you?” Saying this he disappeared, and the aspirant was brought to his senses.

sagar is a misnomer now Pseudo-Vedântism has spoilt the country They simply talk big—‘He only exists,’ ‘The universe is non-existent, in the past, present as well as in the future,’ and so on Nonsense! Do they mean anything by all that? Vedânta cannot be understood except through austerities ”

3rd July

S “Sir, one of Elizabeth Hemans’s poems has the idea that given proper education and environment, two boys born under different circumstances will develop in the same way They do not of course believe in impressions of past lives (Samskâras) ”

Swami “Well, does it hold good always? Five boys living together present five different aspects of character The Western people have got no idea of reincarnation, hence they do not understand past impressions and so on Do you think anybody comes to earth with a *tabula rasa* ?”

In this connection one referred to the

¹ A celebrated Hindi metrical treatise on Advaita Vedânta by Nischaldâs, extensively read by up-country Sâdhus, many of whom make a travesty of its teachings in their everyday life

Darwinian theory and out of fun called a Brâhmana boy of very good habits a descendant of the monkey

Swami "What nonsense! He is a Brâhmana boy with a store of good Samskâras—why should he be descended from the monkey! What a fine intelligence indeed do the Westerners show! What does science really know? Today it arrives at some conclusion, the greater part of which is exploded tomorrow. Let those who will, accept Darwinism. We have got two theories about human creation. One is that after going the round of 84 lacs of births one attains a human body. This sounds very much like Darwinism. The other is that of descent from Godhead. Brahmâ, the Creator, first created beings like Sanat-kumâra and others whom he asked to lead a worldly life. Well, they had just descended from God, so they said, 'What a proposal! We shall be no party to such a plan.' Brahmâ then created the Prajâpatis (Patriarchs), who agreed to embrace a worldly life. It is a simple phenomenon, which we too observe in our everyday life. To this day we find that many are averse to marriage and the worldly life from their very birth. These are the Kumâras. This

second theory is excellent. We are the children of immortality, and why should we be the descendants of monkeys? यदिच्छन्ती ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति—‘Desiring Brahman they practise Brahmacharya.’ Haven’t you heard of Sri Ramakrishna’s parable of the bird called Homâ? It lays eggs in the sky. As the egg falls through space, the young bird comes out of it, and when in the course of its fall it finds it is about to touch the earth, it is reminded of its mother who is high up in the sky. At once it flies straight up. It has no more to fall down on the earth. Similarly, there are many people who as soon as they grow up a little give up all attachment for the world and speed straight towards God.

“(To the boy) Tell me whether you wish to be a Sâdhu or a householder.”

The boy “I will be a Sâdhu.”

Suamī “Certainly, why not? If you try from now you will indeed realize the Lord. There should be a firm resolve in the mind that one must realize Him. If you perfectly control your senses from now, you will be blessed with His vision. And if you wish to be like ordinary men, you will get something to eat, have children, scrape together a little money, and die—there will

be an end of it Do you want the prestige of a householder, or do you want to be a Sâdhu ?”

The boy “Have Sâdhus no prestige ? They too have it ”

Swami “Certainly, Sâdhus too have prestige Look at the honour Swami received ! How like a hero he conquered the world ! What a heroic temperament ! What a perfect mastery over the senses ! If one is like him, one has indeed achieved everything He was absolutely free from the sex-instinct It was because he had his mind pitched on high things that it had no opportunity to come down to a lower level Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the mind of ordinary men is generally confined to the three lower centres in the spinal column, while the mind of the spiritual aspirant rises to the centre in the heart, whence it ascends higher still to the centre in the neck, and then finally to the centre in the head when he attains the state of Samâdhi Then the body dies within three weeks Sri Ramakrishna also used to say that gold is gold whether it lies in a ditch or is kept in a room If power is latent in anybody, it will manifest itself wherever you may put him

“Have faith in God and pray to Him for devotion

“(To S) He wants to have the Pâsupata weapon¹ from Siva

“(To the boy) What will you do with the Pâsupata weapon? You are not a Kshatriya, you are a Brâhmana. You should please Him and ask for the knowledge of Brahman, a Brâhmana has no mightier weapon. Do you know the story of Vasistha and Visvâmitra? King Visvâmitra armed with his bow and arrows one day killed the hundred sons of Vasishtha and went his way, seizing the latter's holy cow - But Vasishtha, though he witnessed all, said nothing and sat with his Brahma-danda (the staff of the Brâhmana) in hand and at peace. Then Visvâmitra with folded palms fell at the feet of Vasishtha and begged his pardon saying, ‘Fie on Kshatriya valour! Real strength is that which a Brâhmana possesses.’”

The boy took his leave to attend to his evening prayers, when the Swami remarked

“The boy has inherited excellent past

¹ A mighty weapon which Arjuna got from Siva, satisfying Him in a duel

The Kâmadhenu which by the mere wish could produce whatever was desired of her

impressions. He is endowed with Sattva that has a touch of Rajas in it, while A— has got Sattva only. If this boy leads a pure life, he will make progress. Otherwise he will become like the ordinary run of boys. There is nothing pre-ordained. In a way everything depends on our personal exertion. The Yogavâsishtha has highly extolled this. I do not mean to say that destiny is altogether a fiction. दैव निहत्य कुरु पौरुषमव्ययशक्ता—Manifest thy manliness by ousting destiny through thy own power. To one who is endowed with personal exertion even destiny becomes favourable. God helps those who help themselves. Relying on destiny people often tend towards degradation. Free-will also comes under this personal exertion. People make mistakes through their own fault, and then lay the blame on destiny. Stumbling on the way is an accident—going along is the natural course. Making mistakes is an accident—rising higher and higher is the natural course.”

S “Between the two blades of a pair of scissors we do not know which is responsible for the cutting. So we cannot ascertain whether destiny or personal exertion is responsible for the accomplishment of an act, and in what measure. We however take

it for granted that both are equally responsible. Our duty is to exert, it is within our control rather than wait for destiny to help us out."

Swami "Quite so. That is the way. Unless one acts like that, nothing can be done. But then, there is such a thing as resignation to the Lord. It is no weakness to say, 'Thy will be done'."

4th July

The parlour was full of eager listeners. A householder came in and prostrating himself before the Swami took his seat. He wanted to give up the world and embrace the monastic life and expressed his intention to the Swami.

Swami "So you came away leaving everyone behind? You had your enjoyments yourself and got away? Don't you see it is cruel and cowardly to get away without making some sort of provision for the family? Do you think one is at liberty to give up the world all of a sudden?"

The gentleman "Well, this is but a relative concern—it is the outcome of ignorance."

Swami "And your fleeing away from the world is absolute—it is the result of knowl-

edge is that so ' Does it stand in the way of religion merely to be in the world ' Once Nârada asked of the Lord as to who was His best devotee The Lord in reply said, 'In such and such a village there is a peasant who is My best devotee Just go and see him ' Narada went to the place and found that the peasant was off to the field Late in the evening the peasant returned home, took the name of the Lord once and then retired for the night Seeing all this Nârada came back to the Lord and said, 'How is this, Lord ? How could this man who was engaged the whole day in trifling worldly pursuits and took Thy name but once, be the best of devotees ? ' 'Well, Nârada,' replied the Lord, 'you will have your question answered soon Now take this cup filled with oil to the brim, and go round the world, and come back ' Nârada went round the world with the greatest caution and when he returned the Lord asked, 'Well, Nârada, how many times did you remember me ! ' Nârada replied, 'How could I remember you ? My attention was on the oil ' 'Well,' said the Lord, 'in your anxiety lest the oil be spilt from the cup you could not remember Me even once, but that peasant, in spite of his being engrossed in work all day, remembers

Me regularly at the end of his day's work
Is he not then a great devotee?"

"Sri Ramakrishna used to relate that once at Dakshineswar one Mukherji, who had left house and home, used to pass his days at the Kâli temple, living on the doles regularly given there. One day Sri Ramakrishna said to him 'You are a married man—have you got children?' On being answered in the affirmative he next inquired who was looking after them. And as soon as he heard from Mukherji's lips that his wife was pining at her father's place, he shouted, 'You rogue, you were the man who married and who had children, and now they must be fed and clothed by your father-in-law! And here you are living on the food that is meant for the poor!' Hearing such words Mukherji went home and began to look after his household duties with zeal.

"The scriptures also mention the four orders of life. First of all, students had to take up the Brahmachârin's vow in the house of the teacher and go through their studies. Then service unto the Guru, strict Brahmacharya, study, etc. were their duties. As soon as these duties were gone through they were free. After finishing the course of study in the teacher's house the students used to

test themselves to see whether they should return to the householder's life. Those who considered themselves under the sway of worldly ideas used to go through the usual ablution ceremony that marked the close of the student's life and entered the world. Here, too, they had such duties as marrying and having children, ministering unto guests, maintaining the family, and so on. And when they finished these duties they were at liberty to take up the next order of life. The same things do not appeal always. When the desire for enjoyment abated and when along with it the duties of the family life too were finished, then they used to retire to the forest and embrace the life of a recluse. They could take their wives also with them—only they had to live as brothers and sisters, without any physical attachment.

'In the Upanishads, too, there is a dialogue between Yâjñavalkya and Maitreyi. Yâjñavalkya reached the state of Sannyâsa as the natural outcome of Knowledge. He said to his two wives, 'Now the time has come for my taking up the monastic life. So whatever I have, you both divide between yourselves.' Then Maitreyi said, 'What shall I do with that which won't give me immortality?' Hearing this Yâjñavalkya said, 'Mai-

treys, I used to love you before, but now I love you all the more ' Then he gave her instructions, and she too renounced

"But can one give up the householder's life though it is no more appealing, when there are wife and children? What then will be their fate? It is selfishness, pure and simple To be in the world and maintain the family, to fulfil one's duties—this also is certainly religion Nothing will be gained by giving up all of a sudden One cannot climb to the roof at one bound, one has to ascend step by step Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'A fruit plucked before maturity rots and gets spoilt A sore bleeds if you take away the scab before time, while it drops of itself when the sore is healed What fine illustrations these—don't you see' Well, everything depends on the mind alone If one happened to be married but later regretted, and informed Sri Ramakrishna of his intention to embrace the monastic life, he would say 'Wait, don't give up the world If you are sincere everything will be set right You have only to pursue faithfully the course laid down in the scriptures' It won't be good for you to leave the world You have got children, go on doing your duty by them—do it unselfishly To say that you

are renouncing the world with the object of calling upon God, would be utterly false. Of course one should devote time to spiritual practices, and this is the time

“It is selfishness that is impure. First of all a man should perform his duties according to his caste and order of life and when the mind is thus purified he should approach the qualified teacher for the attainment of Self-knowledge. There is no way out unless one has fulfilled one’s duties. And the moment you have truly finished the duties of one order of life, those of the next naturally come up. But the case is different for those who have never entered the world since their boyhood

अनेकानि सद्गुरुणि कुमारब्रह्मचरिणाम् ।

दिव गतानि विप्राणामकृत्वा कुलसन्ततिम् ॥

“Thousands of Brâhmanas who were Brahmachâris from their boyhood have reached heaven without continuing their line”¹

“(To the Sannyâsins present) That you people did not enter the world was due to the good impressions of past lives. You have finished all that already, so where was the need for you to enter the world again? It is because you understood everything that

¹ Manu 5 159

you gave up. You have forsooth been born with this privilege. Don't you see that the world is mad after sense-enjoyment? People run into debt to get married. And before the debt is cleared, perhaps, they die! Whenever anybody spoke to SRI Ramakrishna about giving up the world, he would say, 'If you are sincere you will find the circumstances gradually becoming favourable.' He never said, 'Leave everything and come away.' 'If you are sincere'—that is what he used to say, because he knew the contents of everyone's mind. In everything pertaining to this world there are two factors—your own wish as well as the Lord's. Hence it is highly prejudicial to take any step through personal obstinacy. Of course He is inside all, as the controlling principle. SRI Ramakrishna used to tell the parable of a woman in love. She attends to all her household duties but her thoughts are on her lover. When in this way her whole mind goes to her lover, she breaks the family ties and follows the man of her heart. Isn't it a beautiful parable? Work with one hand and serve the Lord with the other. When the time comes, you will be able to serve Him with both hands. And the time does come if one is sincere.

“One should be consistent in thought and words. It won’t do to let the lips utter something which the mind does not approve. What the mind thinks, the lips too should express, and *vice versa*.¹ What has once come out of the lips must be carried out at all cost. One who acts thus finds everything getting favourable to him. What you were saying yesterday about predestination has no meaning. In that case nothing can be done on earth. Even virtue and vice become non-existent. The only case in which predestination holds good is the resignation of the perfect devotee. He works automatically. There is no difference whatever between his will and the Divine will. But that too has its test—no wicked action can be done by him. He never takes a false step. ‘One should elevate the soul with the help of the mind and never depress the mind. The mind verily is one’s friend and it is also one’s enemy. One whose mind is satisfied with Knowledge and Realization, who is unchanged in all circumstances, who has controlled his senses, and looks alike upon a clod of earth, a stone, or a piece of gold, is called a Yogi.’¹

“Sri Ramakrishna used to give no other

¹ Gîtâ

blessing except this, 'Mother, let them have illumination—let them be conscious of their real nature' Râkhâl Mâhâraj (Swami Brahmananda) then used to live with him. It was his relatives who brought him to the Master. But when they found that he was about to renounce, they did not like it. First of all they spoke to Sri Ramakrishna. He did not pay much attention to it. Suresh Babu then used to spend something on the comforts of the devotees about Sri Ramakrishna. One day Manmohan, a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and a relation of Râkhâl Mâhâraj, said 'Suresh Babu does not like that Râkhâl lives here.' Immediately Sri Ramakrishna called out, 'What! who is Suresh? What has Suresh got to do here? Hallo, throw all that (some bedding etc) away—remove them at once. (Whenever the Master got excited everybody would be terribly afraid. None would dare come near.) Because these boys have good characteristics that tend to spirituality, I keep them with me. And I pray to Mother to bless them so that they may realize the Self. My idea is that they should first attain Realization and then they may live anywhere they like.' Hearing this Suresh Babu fell at his feet and with tears in his eyes said that

he had never said such a thing—that it was all false

‘Now you are going down and down because you do not know the real nature of the world. First know it and then be in it and you won’t get bound. Is the world really an evil? The root of all trouble is that you don’t know its nature. Where do you try to flee? By doing so you will be placed between two stools. You will have neither God nor the world. In the Yoga-vâsishtha we read that when Visvâmitra came to king Dasaratha and asked for Râma, the king said to him, ‘Râma is getting reduced every day. I think the spirit of Vairâgya (dispassionateness) is upon him. How can I under the circumstances send him with you to fight the Râkshasas?’ At the king’s command Râma came to the court, saluted those present and took his seat. Then Visvâmitra said to him, ‘Well, Râma, if you have got Vairâgya, we must rejoice at it as it is a rare boon. But tell me why you are getting more and more emaciated and out of spirits every-day. There’s nothing in it to make one melancholy.’ Then fathoming the contents of Râma’s mind Visvâmitra said to Vasishtha, ‘Look here, you give Râma the instructions that Brahmâ gave you and me after our fight

Let him realize the Truth and be in the world '

"Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'Be converted into gold and then you may remain even in an unclean place. You will then remain gold throughout '

"It is not good to give up the world simply because one has not been successful in it. People sometimes wake up only to fall asleep again. 'One can rouse a man who is really asleep, but it is difficult to knock up one who is only feigning '

'Really speaking, it doesn't take one much time to attain Realization. But men are apt to fall asleep', which means that past impressions are too strong for them. One has to summon up all one's resolution and rouse oneself—determined to do or die. One is perhaps dreaming of a woman—but the counter-impressions are so strong that even in dream he is getting indignant. He is alert even in dream. We are not mere machines—we can be alert in all conditions. Whether a man will succeed in attaining Realization or not depends upon the amount of earnestness he has. This is the test.

"You are your own witness. If any mistakes have been made, well, let bygones be bygones. Say, 'I won't do any such thing in

future ' And if you do not repeat the act, there, you attain your object 'Whenever one's mind condemns a wicked course of life, one should sincerely repent and do evil no more ' As one begins to feel repugnance to wicked deeds one must resolutely discard them—then can one be free from their clutches 'I will not do it any more'—one has to say this with great vigour and determination It one expiates for old sins and commits them again, it will lead to no result Sri Ramakrishna disliked a happy-go-lucky spirit He used to say of Swamiji, 'See, what a heroic temperament he has ' As soon as he sets his mind on a thing, he applies himself heart and soul to it ' Circumstances may or may not be favourable, but who cares ? We must strain every nerve to accomplish the thing If you are determined to do it *at any cost*, you will find that great obstacles which you thought would overpower you, ultimately turn out to help you But you must struggle sincerely Does one find circumstances always propitious ? Consider what you have got to do as your duty and go on Are you not undecaying and immortal always ? So why should you go about seeking favourable circumstances ? It is you who have projected all this

उ इच्छति ह्रिं स्मर्तुं व्यापारास्तगैरपि ।

समुद्रे शान्तकल्लीनि स्नातुमिच्छति दुर्मति ॥

‘ He who wishes to think upon the Lord after all his engagements have been finished, is like the fool who wishes to bathe in the sea after the waves have subsided ’

“One wishing to bathe in the sea waits and waits, with the idea that one would have a plunge when the waves would have subsided. Nonsense! Will that moment ever come! Instead of doing so, you buffet against the waves, have your bath and come out. The sea remains always the same. So in this world, you must manage to call upon the Lord *in the midst of these waves*. It is a wild-goose-chase to be on the look-out for opportunities. Now or never! Apply yourselves to it, and disadvantages will turn into advantages.

“Thus says Râmprasâd addressing himself ‘Don’t you hanker after comfort if you will reside at the lotus feet of the Mother. Why should you be a fool in action? Try your best and you will reap an excellent harvest.’

“How beautifully expressed! There is no freedom, no respite until you have done your duties. That which you have given up

without performing, will be waiting for you—only to appear again. Face the brute! You can't save yourself by flight. Taking up the monastic life will be advantageous, while the householder's life is disadvantageous—such considerations are futile. You cannot come to the next stage without performing the duties of the previous one. Aspire after higher things but never shirk the present duties. Don't do that. The case of those who live a celibate life from their boyhood is different. They have come with such good Samskâras that even if they live in the world, they will live there as Sannyâsins. You are what you are—you cannot jump to a higher stage. Avoidance is not good, nor is it possible. Do your duties in the world but think of God all the while. The case of the woman in love who thinks always of her lover in all her daily duties is an illustration in point. One must pray from the bottom of one's heart to have a steadfast devotion for God. To make oneself fit, association with Sâdhus and occasional retirement into solitude are necessary. If one is sincere the Lord Himself prepares the way. You have to offer this mind unto Him. You have to churn out butter first, and then only it won't get mixed up by remaining in water. The greatness of

a Sâdhu is in proportion to the amount of self-examination he has made—to the degree of intimate knowledge he has of his ins and outs Self-examination is a very difficult task It is extremely difficult to detect the tricks that the mind plays Great God !”

5th July

It is drizzling today, but the heat is very oppressive

Swami “It is very troublesome to sleep in the verandah—there is not a breath of air (To Swami A) Well, what’s the use of taking all this trouble? They are doing so much for this body, but is it any way the better? शरीरं क्षणमगुरुम्—‘The body is but fragile ’ ”

The talk drifted on to the orphanage at the Sevâsrama and the education of the boys

Swami “The country has taken up the idea of the Sevâsrama Don’t you see how many Sevâsamitis are being started? Now we can stand by and let the thing be in the background I had a talk about this with Swami Saradananda. We have not as yet been able to do anything in the field of education This work should be taken up now ”

Swami A “Sir, in the verandah of our Boys’ Home we can start a class for day

scholars, but then the difficulty is that the boys, when they come to understand that they have neither to pay school-fees nor fines, lose sight of their interests so much that they begin to be very irregular ”

Swami “They should be warned and expelled D— Babu also wishes that such a school be started — has offered some land for it, and the girls’ school has already been opened He is now in want of capable teachers for boys

“Well, I don’t find really capable men There are so many graduates now, but one vainly looks for that spirit in them I am not for any sweeping remark, but the majority are a bit wayward Their idea is that when they have left home they should by all means avoid work They think of doing their bit of allotted work, and no more Some, again, remark that these are Swami’s ideas and not Sri Ramakrishna’s Goodness gracious ! Are Swami’s views different from Sri Ramakrishna’s ? If any has doubts, why doesn’t he come forward and have them solved ? Discussions are always beneficial

“Do you know — ? He also holds the same view When I was lying seriously ill at the Holy Mother’s place in Calcutta, I used to have long discussions with him He would

say, 'Let us first find out the truth through contemplation, and then we shall work'

"Everybody says he would practise meditation and Japa. But does he really do that? And is this the only way to realization? To be in the Order and not accept its creed is very bad. One must see what the creed is. They would take all the advantages of the Mission but won't accept its creed. The spirit of Swamiji—that he would be born a hundred times simply to serve others—this is the creed of the Mission, which they should by all means accept. Otherwise why should they be in it? Are there not lots of monks? Let them beg their food and meditate."

6th July

The Swami was seated in the verandah surrounded by Brahmachârlins and Sannyâsins.

Swami "With whatever evil tendencies one may come, one is sure to improve in holy company. As when you go to an otto-shop, the scent will enter your nostrils, whether you will it or not. Well, people are not often inclined to associate with holy persons, and few have the capacity to do so. Sri Ramakrishna would be talking and the devotees listening, but their companions

would whisper, 'Well, let us go, how long will you be listening?' The devotees of course would have no inclination to leave, and their friends would say in exasperation, 'So you remain here, we shall be waiting in the boat' How beautifully would Sri Ramakrishna describe this !

"Well, holy association is bound to produce good effects, for life only can communicate life. Nothing but a round body can give a round shadow. Life can give much more than writing can. What a tremendous difference is there between reading and hearing a lecture ! In writing, also, the more life one puts into it, the more effective it becomes. Look at Swamiji's writings and those of other Swamis. Personality is the chief thing. It is only a handful of men who are directing this world—the rest follow like sheep. On his return from his travels all the world over Swamiji remarked, 'Democracy is a myth. Only a handful of men rule everywhere' "

"A country goes to ruin when it fails to produce the right type of men for its task. Ours is a religious country. She has all along been producing saints. Show me one period of her history when she has failed in this. A single life has been inspiring thousands of

people—and that for centuries ! Look at Nānak Look at Kabir See how long Tulsidās has been swaying this part of the country (United Provinces)

“Today a lady came to me who has recently been widowed I had a talk with her about Sri Ramakrishna Her people had invited Swami Premananda to their place Her husband’s brother is a graduate who is conducting a school in his village He is an honorary worker A new spirit has come into the country It will take time, it is true, but undoubtedly there is a stir all over the land Formerly there was not the boldness of speech that we meet with now ”

8th July

Swami “It is very difficult to get rid of bad influences, if once they have a hold on the mind If the youths are convinced of the utility of chastity and the evils of its opposite, they may afterwards marry and turn out decent citizens Those who are spiritually bent are free from temptation, for chastity is the bed-rock of spirituality Unless one is chaste the mind is never steady ‘The body is formed of the elements and is swayed by thought If the mind-stuff is disturbed the elements are destroyed.

Therefore it should be carefully protected. A steady mind-stuff only can give rise to a bright understanding.¹

“The best element in our body is preserved by chastity. If there is no chastity the mind-stuff becomes unsteady. Then the image of the Chosen Deity (Ishta) is no more clearly reflected in it. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘If the coating of mercury is all right, then the mirror gives a perfect image but if there is any break, the image is defective.’ What is the mind-stuff? It is that which gives rise to thought—where the first impression is received. So it is clear that if the very source of thought is agitated, meditation is out of the question. We simply go on reading ‘mind-stuff (Chitta), mind, intellect,’ but which is which, one has to understand by diving deep into the interior. It is difficult to escape if the mind-stuff has already received bad impressions. Hence the Lord says in the Gîtâ: “Therefore, O Arjuna, first control the organs and kill the wicked lust, which destroys both Knowledge and Realization.’ Look at the immensity of the evil!”

“‘If the mind, which is outgoing in its

¹ Vivekachudâmanî

activities, is ever so slightly deflected from the Ideal, it goes down and down, even as a play-ball inadvertently dropped at the head of a staircase goes down bumping from one step to another '¹ How it goes down, and down, till it reaches the extreme limit of the fall !''

Q "Does one attain to the knowledge of Brahman by practising chastity for twelve years at a stretch ?"

Swami "Undoubtedly Through the power of Ojas² the knowledge of Brahman unfolds itself The Knowledge already exists, we have only to unfold it If you can maintain your chastity for twelve years, the mind gets steady, with the result that the Knowledge unfolds itself What power but this helped Swami to revolutionize the world ! About Keshab Chandra Sen Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'Had Keshab renounced the world, he could have done much more work '

"Swami used to tell us, 'Do you think I only lecture ? I know I give them something solid, and they know they receive something solid ' In New York Swami was lecturing to a class Oh, the tremendous

¹ Avadhuta Gîtâ

² Sexual energy converted into spiritual energy

effect of it! K said that while listening to the lecture he felt as if some force was drawing the Kundalini up, as at the time of meditation. After the lecture was finished (it took an hour) K announced that he would hold a question class. Most of the audience had gone after Swami's lecture. Swami rebuked—saying, 'A question-class after this! Do you want to spoil the effect of my lecture?' Just see! Oh, what a Power Sri Ramakrishna left for the world in Swami! Hasn't he changed the very thought-current of the world? Think of the strength of one whom nothing could attract. Once a monk frankly told me that for eighteen years he had been grinding Vedânta, but was not yet above the temptation of sex. His mind had evidently imbibed some impressions. To root out impressions is an uphill task. But if one has the determination to say, 'What if I have once done something wrong? Now I know what it is, so I won't do it any more', then one can get through. About monks Swami used to say, 'A Sâdhu can have all his faults forgiven, but unchastity is unpardonable. He must be strictly continent.' Swami moved amongst ladies—beautiful, rich, and gifted—but none could attract

him Rather he attracted them to himself
Can you conceive it?

“A householder devotee once had a nice experience He had drunk freely and was very excited He stopped his carriage before a house of ill fame and went up the stairs At the head of the staircase before the door he found Sri Ramakrishna standing! He fled in shame Unless God saves us, there is no way out Blessed are those who have no evil impressions upon their minds—whom He protects They alone are saved None can escape from this by personal exertions But then Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘If you are sincere, Mother will set everything right’ There must be sincerity—it won’t do to profess one thing and meditate on another You may pass for an honest man before others, but you cannot hoodwink yourself You are your own witness So, if you pray to the Lord, with your whole heart, He cannot but listen—take my word for it But you must not be a hypocrite Swamiji used to say, ‘Such a man allows himself to fall into the trap and then laments his fate’ What’s the use of weeping after the deed is done? Say like a hero, ‘I won’t do it any more!’ Then only will the Lord come to your help

“There is no creature more despicable than a person subject to passion. To what indignities he puts himself! Thank your stars that you have escaped its influence. Even men of light and leading give way to it. There is a story of a king who was very henpecked. One day a friend touched on this weak point of his, and from that time he tried to correct himself. He came to his inner apartments, but talked little with the queen except on important matters. He was very grave. The queen understood everything. The king was taking his meal, and the queen’s pet cat was nibbling at his plate. He was trying to drive the animal but it would not keep away. The queen thereupon tauntingly reminded him that the animal had enough indulgence already, and was not to be beaten off now. One cannot remove a pest that has already got indulgence. One must hold the reins tight in one’s own hand, and never relax them. Otherwise the case is hopeless.

“Swami used to say, ‘Ready to attach and ready to detach any minute!’ We take up a work and get attached to it—we cannot detach ourselves from it. But this should not be. We must have the power to give up at will—to leave everything behind, for nothing is really ours. Look at Sri Rama-

krishna Hriday was ordered to clear out of Dakshineswar. The Durwan came and said to Sri Ramakrishna, 'You will have to leave this place.' 'What do you mean?' It is not I, but Hriday,' replied Sri Ramakrishna. The man said, 'No, my master has ordered that both of you should go.' This decided the question. He put on his slippers and moved towards the gate. Trailokya Babu¹ saw this from the concert room, ran and fell at his feet, saying, 'Sir, why are *you* going? I have not asked *you* to quit.' Without speaking a word Sri Ramakrishna came back. Just see, there was not a bit of animus in his renunciation. And how we raise a dust over our deeds! Had we been in his place, we would surely have given the Babu a piece of our mind. But Sri Ramakrishna said nothing—he was as ready to go away as to return.

"He used to be shabbily dressed, so much so that one day a man mistook him for a gardener and ordered him to pluck a rose for him, which he immediately did. Some time after, that very man came to know about his mistake and stammered out an apology. At this Sri Ramakrishna said that there was

¹ Grandson of Râni Rasmani

nothing wrong in it, as one asking for help should be assisted by all means' Isn't it grand? Again, look at Swamiji. He gave away everything not to his disciples but to his brother-disciples. Among the first trustees of the Math you will find only his brother-disciples, and not one disciple. He used to live upon a private fund, for as he said, 'I have given away everything'. Once he wrote to me, 'Now that I have given everything to you, I am at peace'. What a wonderful man! You could have seen his influence had you been to the West. He himself used to say, 'My work will be more in the West, thence it will react on India'.

"One day he was very much annoyed and said, 'I see I have to conduct the whole music single-handed—to sing and play the instruments and do everything myself, with none to help me!'

"Sri Ramakrishna knew a lot about things. Girish Babu once said to him, 'You are my superior in every respect—even in wicked things'. At this Sri Ramakrishna said, 'No, no, it is not so. Here (meaning himself) there are no Samskâras. There is a world of difference between knowing a thing by actual experience and learning about it

through study or observation Experience leaves impressions on the mind which it is very difficult to get rid of This is not the case with knowledge through study or observation ' ”

9th July

The Swami was talking to a boy, he asked him

“You practise meditation, don't you? Meditation can be on divine forms as well as on Om As one goes on meditating, the mind gets absorbed in Om तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम् । As one goes on ‘repeating Om and reflecting on its meaning,’ the mind becomes steady, that is to say, it does not give it up ‘Through surrender to God all the obstructions to the concentration of the mind are destroyed and one realizes one's Self ’

“Then Patanjali says about the obstructions to Yoga What are those distracting influences? They are as follows One may get *diseased* Either one becomes mad or has some serious illness that prevents any further progress *Lassitude* is inaction of the mind or torpidity *Doubt* is cogitating whether a thing is of this kind or that—whether a particular course of action will produce the desired results or not Not doing that which will

lead to Samâdhi or Yoga is *inadvertence*
Laziness is the want of proper care or exertion
 owing to an excess of Tamas or dullness
Attachment is attraction for sense-objects
Delusion is mistaking one thing for another
 Not reaching the higher states of Samâdhi is
 what is called *non-attaining of heights* There
 is one more, *viz* the *inability to stay on* in
 a particular state of Samâdhi already
 attained These disturb the mind and
 prevent Yoga All these obstructions are
 removed if one meditates on Om But then,
 a man may not at all be disposed to
 meditate !

“When one suffers from biliousness, even
 sugar-candy tastes bitter But that is the
 medicine for it If one regularly uses it, the
 disease will disappear and the sugar-candy
 also will taste sweet Similarly with the name
 of God If a man under nescience repeats
 it every day, even as a medicine, in time it
 becomes sweet The trouble will go and he
 will also be able to taste the sweetness of the
 Lord’s name It will destroy the very roots
 of the disease of nescience Therefore one
 should practise repeating it even against one’s
 wishes He who gives it up is lost The
 Gîtâ says, ‘The mind, O Arjuna, is controlled
 by practice and non-attachment’ It also

says, 'One should slowly withdraw one's mind from sense-objects through patient discrimination. Fixing the mind on the Self, one must no more think of anything else.'

"The author of the Yoga-Sutras says, 'By carefully persisting in practice, for long and without intermission, the concentration becomes steady.' We must attain to a steady concentration. The young plant needs to be hedged round, but when the tree is big, it requires protection no more. We must have steadfastness to the ideal. As soon as we decide that a certain course is right, we must resolve to give up our life for it. We must have decision in our character. 'O Arjuna, the decisive judgment here is one, but people of unsettled minds have innumerable varying ideas.' We must decide on a particular course and devote our whole life to it.

"ब्रह्मचर्यादिवशमाप्तम् — 'From continence comes strength.' We must make ourselves fit. Before taking up any work, make yourself fit for it. Because Ramamurti has stopped a running motor car, would it be proper on my part to try to do so? It would be foolish. But it is not an altogether impossible feat. If one watches how he does it, and makes

oneself gradually fit, then one can do it, as Gobar is doing. Most people do not know their own strength. It was Jâmbavân who roused the power of Hanumân. Angada asked the monkeys as to which of them would be able to cross the sea for the sake of Râma and return after finishing his work. Someone said he could go but not return. Then Jâmbavân said, 'Here is one who can both go and return.' Then he narrated the valiant deeds of Hanumân—how immediately after his birth he had jumped to the sun to catch it. This had the effect of rousing Hanumân's self-confidence. He started on his aerial journey. On the way Suramâ assuming the shape of a serpent, confronted him and said, 'Pass through my mouth before you go.' Hanumân first saluted her and said, 'Now I am going on Râma's errand. Let me finish it first. On my return I shall pass through your mouth.' See how courteous he was. The line of least resistance. Suramâ said, 'No, you must do it now.' Hanumân was in a fix. He increased his bulk, but Suramâ, too, did the same. Each vied with the other in increasing the stature. Finding it was of no use, Hanumân suddenly contracted his body to a tiny size and passed through.

"The best servant is he who acts in anticipation of his master's wish, he who acts after the orders are issued is the mediocre servant, and the worst servant is he who gets the order but neglects to carry it out

"Couriers were being sent out in search of Sîtâ. Everyone started. But Hanumân, before leaving, asked for credentials. From this Râma understood that he would succeed. He whispered to him the required message. Reaching Lankâ, Hanumân gave ample proof of his bravery, by humiliating Râvana.

"Books on Yoga say that all power is in us. We must control the mind through proper discipline, then only will its powers be manifested. For the accumulation of spiritual power absolute continence is needed.

"It is very difficult to be a disciple. Haven't you heard the story? A man wanted to be a disciple. He went to a Guru and said, 'Sir, make me a disciple.' The Guru replied, 'Will you be able to be one? A disciple has to draw water, fetch wood, and serve the teacher. Will you be able to do all this?' Then the man said, 'And what has the Guru to do?' The teacher replied, 'Not much to speak of. He sits at ease and now and then gives a little instruction. That's all.' Then the man said, 'If you

think it difficult for me to be a disciple, why don't you make me a Guru instead?" How funny, everybody wants to reap the harvest without sowing the seed. The fit man overcomes his defects bit by bit. If you try to do it all of a sudden, you won't succeed, for they will persist. Therefore one should withdraw the mind slowly.

"There the sun does not shine, nor the moon, nor stars, nor even lightning. So fire is nowhere. It shining, everything else shines. Through its lustre all this is shining. We have mixed up the subject and the object. They can be separated. I am the subject—not the object. The whole universe up to Buddhi (intellect) falls under the category of the object. मूलं मूलाभावात् अमूलं मूलम्—'There being no further cause, the First Cause is uncaused.' How much must they have thought who first discovered these truths!"

"Discrimination must be thorough, or it is of no use. Children often say, 'Heaven bear witness!' What a funny idea! They have picked up the phrase from someone. They do not reason on the idea, so they say it."

"As a bird flies to the sky with its two wings, so we must have the two wings of discrimination and renunciation to climb to

the edifice of Liberation. If one has real discrimination and renunciation, one is safe. A man runs after water in a mirage only so long as he mistakes the mirage for real water. Once the delusion is broken, nobody goes after a mirage for water. The truth about it is that he only escapes whom the Mother Herself holds by the hand. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'A finger-print is clear when the ink is all right, and if it is bad the impression also is bad. Spiritual instructions make a lasting impression on the mind that possesses discrimination and renunciation, and when there is a deficiency in these the impression produced is proportionately small.'

Afternoon

Alluding to spiritual exercises such as concentration and meditation the Swami said: 'तत्र प्रत्ययैकतानता ध्यानम् ।—When the mind is withdrawn from all other objects except one and fixed on the latter, then the succession of similar impressions on that object is called meditation.' And, as Swami Vivekananda used to say, 'Fixing the mind on some particular object like a lump of dough is called concentration.'

"Nothing drops from the skies all of a sudden. Why don't all have concentration?"

Because they don't fulfil the conditions necessary for it, *viz* absolute continence This is known as strength What can you expect of one who lacks this strength? The long and short of it is that one must have full self-control The Gîtâ says 'In My opinion, Yoga is impossible for one who has no self-control But one who has controlled his senses may, if he tries, get at it by adopting the proper means'

"People follow their own whims and fail to get good results The scriptures are there, but they won't look into them Nor would they listen to the teacher In the end they become unfit for Yoga 'One who is moderate in food and pastime, in his effort for work, and in sleep and wakefulness—for such a man Yoga puts an end to all miseries'

"If one has some disease, it will pass off, but one must keep his spiritual practices going"

10th July

Swami (Singing) " 'Everything depends on Thy will, Mother, Thou actest as Thou pleasest' Nowadays I am intensely liking this idea This idea appeals to me more and more as days pass by Good and evil—Thou art both Through Thy will they come

to pass. The Lord has good work done by those whom He will raise, and again, bad work by others whom He will degrade. 'Thou makest the lame scale mountains and the elephant stick in a quagmire' 'The mind—poor thing'—is not to blame. Kâlî is the juggler's daughter that makes it dance as She pleases' There is a relief in the thought itself, that behind all this there is a Power which guides everything. But the rationalists won't admit this view. They will say, 'Can an effect be produced without a cause?' But the other party will reply, 'He is the Cause of all causes.'

"Formerly I, too, would not admit this and had heated discussions over it with Swami Adbhutânanda in particular. I used to say, 'If God acts according to His sweet will, He becomes a despot. Is He an autocrat like the Czar of all Russia?' He is just, merciful and benign.' He would reply, 'Well, it is good that you are thus defending your God against all blemish. It is excellent.' What a nice answer! He spoke from the suprarational standpoint. But from the rationalistic standpoint it is open to much criticism. It strikes at the root of free-will. So long as one has only theoretical knowledge, such a view is dangerous. One really qual-

fied to take that standpoint never takes a wrong step

"In my boyhood, when I saw a puppet-show and heard a puppet scream, I thought that it actually made that sound. The puppets seemed to move of their own accord. But later on I was disillusioned to find that some one pulled the wires from behind the screens.

"Nowadays the theory of Mahâmâyâ or a Universal Force manipulating everything, appeals to me very much. I haven't got words to tell you how I like it. It is because the mind has accepted the truth of it. Swami also in his later days used to have great faith in Mahâmâyâ. To be like an automaton in Her hands is easier said than done. If we submit to Her, She never fails to protect us. With the advance of age there comes a time when, instead of leaning on the theory of causation, we naturally resign ourselves to the Divine Mother.

11th July

Swami "The idea of the millennium, even though it may never be fulfilled, is commendable. The poet, Surendra Nath Mazumdar, says, it can come to pass only 'when men will be like women in their

nature He is a very fine poet You may laugh at these lines, but I read them in my boyhood and I never laughed '

One of the audience said that the passage in question referred only to the softer feelings of women, not to their effeminacy

Szami "Quite so The poet says, 'Man is but a beast of burden, how absurd, then, for him to be inflated with pride !' Men are mere drudges—they pass their lives in shouldering the burden of the family, and it is no easy matter for them to manifest the grace of women—this is what the poet means "

Someone "Sir, everyone says that women lead to hell and so forth But had they written books, they would also have painted men exactly in the same colours "

Szami "They are doing it ! Don't you see how they are giving tit for tat in the West ? The scriptures have not condemned women as a whole They have distinguished between higher and lower types of women Sri Ramakrishna also used to speak in the same way The woman who always drags a man towards sense-gratification is of the lower type, while she who helps a man Godward is of the higher type The strictures of the Sâstras are on the former class

of women. You certainly do not praise one who is always dragging another towards sense-gratification. Therefore the Sâstras advise aspirants to keep away from such women, even from those who associate with them. Don't you notice the great influence of association? When we were at school, some boys while returning home used to enter an opium-smokers' den and try to pose as drunkards. Opium-smokers, you know have a dread for drunkards. One of the boys, however, in so doing, himself turned into a confirmed opium-smoker! See the dreadful consequences!

“Impressions, once formed, are most difficult to root out. Sometimes they even work in the form of somnambulism. Swami once described the marvellous workings of this state. He cited an instance of a Western woman who in sleep used to open graves, take away things and put them under her bed. On waking she remembered nothing of all this. A girl who had not learned even the alphabet, used to deliver fine lectures in sleep. Had this been in our country, it would have been taken as a case of possession by evil spirits. But it was in the West, so they began a research, and it was ultimately found that some ten or twelve years back, the girl

had worked as a maid with a scientist who was in the habit of lecturing and reading aloud. There they discovered a relation of cause and effect.

“In Calcutta, a young man of character, learning and intelligence set himself to reforming women of ill-fame. A girl unfolded to him her tale of woe, which moved his heart. He then became inextricably attached to her. One must not be too bold, for there is always a chance of danger.

“I know of another incident which is very wonderful. It is not a piece of information picked up from books—I was an eye-witness to it. A Bengalee graduate, a monk, of great renunciation, was a class-friend of Swami, through whom we came to know this monk. He prided himself on being a perfect master of his senses. He used to beg money for lepers and for people ailing from foul diseases, and serve them. He used to say to us, ‘Swami is the only one amongst you who has got brains. You may be Sâdhus, but none of you have brains.’ He did not believe in the authority of the Sâstras, and used to say, ‘If we too write books, they will be just as good Sâstras.’ He was much given to argumentation. His boldness too was remarkable. People made much of him, and

deservingly too. Once I had to see him at Allahabad. He frankly told me that he had just had a fall. I rebuked him for his giving way to temptation at such an advanced age. He then disclosed to me everything, how being under the impression that he was proof against temptation he got befooled by a wicked woman. Pride humbled him. In such matters one must never be daring. Hence the clear note of warning in the scriptures against them."

13th July

Swami "Swami used to bring with him all sorts of people to Sri Ramakrishna. At this the Master would say 'What worthless people do you bring—one-eyed, lame, and so forth? You don't know good people from bad people—don't bring anyone and everyone'."

"Swami always used to help the weak. He would say 'The weaker the man, the more help should he get. If a Brâhmana boy needs one teacher, engage four such for a Pariah.' What a grand statement!"

"Once Sri Ramakrishna was very angry with a lady devotee. He asked all of us not to go to her house or eat from her hands. He also asked her not to come to Dakshi-

neswar Against this serious injunction of his, who would dare visit her house? Swamiji, however, said to Swami Shivananda one day, 'Come, let us have a walk' In the course of the walk he came to the lady's house and wanted something to eat The lady was beside herself with joy and fed him heartily After this Swamiji went to Sri Ramakrishna and told him what he had done Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Well, I forbade you and yet you went there and ate!' Swamiji replied, 'Well, what harm was there? I have also invited her to come here'

"Once he importuned Sri Ramakrishna for the sake of Hazra The Master was then at Cossipore Swamiji would not leave him—his persistent demand was, 'You must do something for him—must bless him' Sri Ramakrishna said, 'He will have nothing now, but he will have it at the time of death' It actually came to pass Swamiji was a believer at heart in grace and things of that sort

"L used to fall asleep early, and once Sri Ramakrishna was very much vexed at it He wanted to remove him from Dakshineswar But Swamiji interceded and the matter ended peacefully It was for this reason that L used to say, 'If anyone is really a brother-disciple, it is Vivekananda'

“Once a boy came to the Math to stay. Everyone was against it. Swami said, ‘Sri Ramakrishna could read a man’s heart, so his opinion as to admitting a man or otherwise used to be correct. But I have not this power. So I am prepared to give a chance to all. If you, like Sri Ramakrishna, know how to read one’s mind, well, you may decline to admit the boy.’

“Then he asked everyone his opinion on the matter. When my turn came I said ‘I have marked this well that none can live here whom Sri Ramakrishna does not like to have. Those who are to stay will stick and those who are not, will go away.’ At this Swami remarked ‘Well said. It is an excellent plan.’ The boy was admitted but left after a few days.

“Even men like Girish Babu¹ had a place with Sri Ramakrishna, who could fit in with everybody. But what we do is to try to mould all according to our own ideas. Whereas he used to take everybody where he was and push him forward. He never disappointed anybody by failing in the attempt to mould him according to his own light. He had a distinct relation with each devotee and

¹ The celebrated actor-dramatist of Bengal, who had been an out-and-out Bohemian.

maintained that throughout. Through humour he would teach them a good deal. Ah, what a teacher he was! Where can one get a teacher like him?

“Swamiji, too, was a great humorist. One day I was working with a knife when its tip broke, and I was sad. Seeing this Swamiji said, ‘Well, a knife has always an end like that. It certainly won’t have an attack of cholera or typhoid!’ At this I laughed out. Didn’t he put it beautifully?”

“When a mother teaches her child, how deep the impression is! Though she does not give out that she is teaching, by her words alone the best teaching is imparted. Well, there is that great love behind. A teacher should put himself in line with the mentality of the pupil. Then only will the instruction be effective.

“Once a gentleman came to Sri Ramakrishna from Jubbulpore. He was a scholar, an M.A., and was very frank, but he had an agnostic turn of mind. So he had much discussion with Sri Ramakrishna. He confessed that he had great mental unrest, but he would not pray to God, because, as he said, there was no proof of His existence! Sri Rramakrishna said to him, ‘Well, I suppose you have no objection to praying like

this, "If Thou really art, then listen to my prayer" If you pray like this, it will do you good' The gentleman thought over it and then said that he had no objection to that sort of prayer Sri Ramakrishna asked him to follow the advice and come to him again The gentleman came again He was a changed man Touching Sri Ramakrishna's feet, he wept as he said, 'You have saved me!' Swamiji also once transmitted faith in God into Kidi's¹ mind by a touch Kidi was a great agnostic before that

"Swamiji really had the power to help others He had no jealousy But that's where we are put into difficulties We are always afraid lest anybody tops over us But he was too great for that sort of fear He had not the least bit of jealousy He used to say 'Help everyone forward from where he is, and if you can, supply his particular deficiency But if you can't, don't try to drag him to your own level'

"How wonderfully Sri Ramakrishna taught each man so as to remove his particular wants! He used to illustrate it saying 'A mother has made various curries out of a fish She doesn't give all her boys the same

¹ A pet name given by Swamiji to his disciple Singaravelu Mudaliar

thing She gives to each what would exactly suit his stomach ' The Master followed this in practice also

"Swami Yogananda once heard reproaches against Sri Ramakrishna He pocketed the affront and reported the matter to the Master Hearing this the Master said, 'They abused me and you kept quiet!' And he rebuked the Swami

"Again, some time after this event, one day Swami Niranjanananda was coming to Dakshineswar by boat A number of people in it were criticizing Sri Ramakrishna The Swami was exceptionally strong He at once came out of the cabin and placing his legs across began to roll the boat saying 'You are abusing Sri Ramakrishna I shall now sink this boat I would like to see who dares to oppose me' They were all frightened, and besought him to stop When Sri Ramakrishna heard this he said 'You fool, if they abused me, what was that to you? Let everybody say what he likes, what matters it to you?'

"You see the fun! The teaching was different, according to the recipient's need. Where can you find a teacher like him?"

14th July

Swami "Everything is hypnotism—the play of Mâyâ. Have you seen hypnotic performances? A man under hypnotic spell swims on land if he is given the suggestion. The Divine Enchantress (Mahâmaya) has hypnotized us all. Vidyâ Mâyâ and Avidya Mâyâ (leading respectively to knowledge and ignorance) are both hypnotism. We have to destroy the one with the help of the other, for knowledge is the opposite of ignorance. You know Swami's story. A jackal ate a part of a Mohammedan's food. Now the jackal is considered very unholy among the Mohammedans. The man went to a Mullah and sought his advice on the point. The Mullah said, 'Dogs are the enemies of jackals. So if you can have the food eaten by a dog, then it will become pure again.' (Laughter.) One has to destroy Avidyâ by Vidyâ—ignorance by knowledge."

Question "Is something else needed to destroy Vidyâ again?"

Swami "No. Vidyâ leads a man to the Reality and itself ceases to be. Don't you remember Sri Ramakrishna's parable of the three robbers?"¹

¹ A man was attacked in a forest by three robbers who seized all he had. One of them

15th July

Swami "There is a mention of the Uttarâyana¹ in the Mahâbhârata Bhishma was waiting for the Uttarâyana By this no particular time is meant It only shows that Bhishma had the power to die whenever he chose The scriptures do not mean by the word Uttarâyana any time at all—it only means the Deva or deity identifying himself with that time We can well understand this It is like people coming forward to receive a distinguished visitor I am reminded of an incident in this connection

"B got news that his father was ill Before he reached the place, the gentleman had expired As soon as he stepped into the room he saw a shining figure He

wanted to kill him, but another interposed So they tied his hands and feet and left him Shortly after, the third robber came, and setting him free conducted him to the high road, within sight of his house Out of gratitude the man wanted to invite him to his house, but the kind robber declined, saying that he would then be caught by the police The Master compared the three Gunas—Tamas, Rajas, and Sattva—to these three robbers respectively Tamas kills, Rajas binds, and Sattva sets free But it too is a robber—it cannot stand before Realization Here Vidyâ represents the Sattva

¹*Lit* the six months of the sun's northward course

wrote to me that first he thought that perhaps it was his father waiting to meet him. But suddenly the idea flashed to his mind that it might be some angel come there to escort the departing soul. B of course won't tell an untruth, he is not the man to do so. Besides, I can very well understand such things as the following statement of the Gîtâ

“Fools do not perceive when the soul departs from the body, or lives in it or enjoys things through the help of the Gunas. But wise men see it doing all this.

“Swamiji used to say, ‘He who has seen even a ghost is much greater than a mere book-learned Pundit—because he has got an opportunity to form a conviction about the future life.’”

16th July

Swami “When I was dining today it at once struck me that bread won't agree with me still I took it. Just see the fun of it! We know that a certain course of action is wrong, but we do it all the same. Such is the magic spell of the Divine Mother! Again, a certain action appeals to us while performing it. Haven't you heard that story—‘It is beginning

to taste nice as I eat it." A son who had returned home from service was taking his food. The old mother had cooked many things for him. The son said, "Oh, mother, what's this that you have cooked?" It is simply horrible." At this moment his wife came in and said, "What do you mean?" Well, it's all *my* cooking!" "Indeed!" exclaimed the startled young man. Then after a while he said, "Ah, it begins to taste nice as I eat it." (Laughter.)

"Nothing really is of any use in the world—people only go madly hither and thither in search of things in the fond hope of getting them.

"There lived a courtesan in the kingdom of Janaka. One night she—poor woman—was waiting in suspense hoping that someone or other would pay her a visit. When it was about two o'clock and no one turned up she gave up all expectation. She said to herself, "There is no other more unfortunate woman in this whole kingdom than myself. Alas, what tortures have I not suffered, deluded by hope! Enough! Let me now go and retire." Saying this she retired for the night. An Avadhuta (itinerant monk) was near by. He saw all this and said apostrophizing the woman, "You have given up all

hope and are happily asleep I bow to you
You are my teacher ' Saving this he went
away

"I saw in the papers that Sir James Meston found himself in a pretty fix He said 'Such a great storm (the Mohammedan conquest) blew over the Hindu Society but how could it retain its individuality by absorbing all? Whence could such vitality come? The Mohammedans proselytized at the point of the sword, but still they could do nothing to injure it!'

"Our relations are with Brahman It is therefore quite in the fitness of things that we should possess vitality Sir James says, 'The Hindus will adapt themselves well to the democratic form of government, too The authorities perhaps thought that when the Hindu Society was given a democratic government, it would lose much of its strength But that was not to be '

Someone "They say that though they have failed to make us actual converts to Christianity on a large scale, yet they have succeeded in christianizing our ideas as a whole "

Swami "The race idea is becoming so prominent that some day they may even eschew Christ as an Asiatic! They have now

got their philosophy of the Superman Well, you have seen during the last war what a state of things Supermen could bring about !

“I have received a letter from — Babu He wrote that to me when his son died From his letter I could clearly see what the Gîtâ meant by ‘that grief which shatters the senses’ He is reading the Tantras now The Tantras are practical while the Upanishads are theoretical In many respects the Tantras go ahead of the Upanishads For instance, you have the Upâsanâ (meditation or worship) in the Tantras, which is very grand Show me the man who has not recognized Sakti (the Lord’s Power) Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘Even the Incarnations worshipped Sakti and then with Her grace, they preached religion’

“Sankara, too, was a great believer in Sakti. He has written numerous hymns to Her. You know that story, I suppose One day Sankara was returning from his bath in the Ganges He had not much faith in Sakti then Sakti lay down on his way in the form of an old woman and when Sankara came she told him about her miseries Sankara touched her But immediately all his power vanished He then understood that this was Sakti, and began to sing Her

praises in a hymn That was the origin of the *Ānanda Laharī* Having pleased Śakti with that hymn, he got back his power

"The *Mahimna Stotra* is the best of all hymns I used to read it daily while at Kankhal I also read Madhusudan's commentary on it There was a Gandharva called Pushpadanta who, treading on some flowers that had been offered to Śiva lost his power of going through the air Then he chanted those verses and got back his power. It is a grand hymn "

19th July

Someone informed the Swami that Châmeli Puri, a celebrated monk living at Benares had breathed his last

Swami "When?"

Someone "Yesterday afternoon "

Swami "Do any of you know more details? He was very old too—108 years For sixty years he lived in that very garden How spirited he was! Because as you know, he was a perfectly chaste man I went to see him once He was uttering, 'Śiva Kedar! Śiva Kedar!' What a tremendous strength was in that call! The death of such people is like a ripe fruit dropping off of itself from the tree They don't

feel any pain. Well I am fifty-four, and the world appears so old to me. But he was 108 years of age—just double that of mine—and how very old must the world have appeared to him! He must have known a lot of the old history of Benares. A—Babu looked after him for three or four years. He told me that when he had first gone to see the monk, the latter had said to him, 'I am fasting the whole day. What has the Mother sent through you?' Give it to me and I shall eat it. Ever since that he supplied him with food. His assistant, Pandit —, used to go to the monk's place daily with food.

"Pandit— has a long nose. Can you tell me what a long nose stands for? You must have read in Napoleon's Biography how he says, 'Had I a few men with long noses, I could have done everything.' A long nose is a sign of great faithfulness.

"There is another Sâdhu here named Magni Babu near the Asi Ghât. He too is very old. He has been living long at Benares. He is a Nâshthika Brahminachârî, and a good scholar, but of the orthodox type. He got to that stage which is called in the scriptures Vidvat Sannyasa, when monasticism comes naturally to a man. He has great vitality in him and gets rid of serious attacks

of illness without much effort. Once he was seriously ill which hampered his attending to all the duties of a Brahmacharin. Then he went to the bank of the Ganges and himself took the vow of Sannyâsa according to the scriptural rites. I have seen him a number of times. He is always absorbed in contemplation, which perhaps has brought him the title of Magni Babâ ('the absorbed monk'). The orthodox attitude has both advantages and disadvantages.

"I was reading about Hirananda's life today and liked it very much. He too was a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and was much liked by the Master. During his last illness, Hirananda came from Sindh to see him. He brought some sweets and loose trousers for Sri Ramakrishna who wore the trousers for a day. One day he set Hirananda to argue with Swami. The latter spoke from the standpoint of knowledge, while Hirananda spoke from the standpoint of devotion. He did not argue. He was a disciple of Keshab Babu also."

Noticing some birds moving in search of food on the lawn near by the Swami said "They have got their young ones, so they are in search of food. How marvellous! They won't eat the food themselves but will

take it to their young ones. Again, as soon as these are grown up a little, they will peck at them and drive them away. They are doing the Divine Mother's work. See how She is having Her work done through them. 'Thou dost Thy work, Mother, but people only lay claim to it.'¹

"Animal bodies are for the experience of pleasure or pain only (the result of past work). No fresh work (Karma) can be done through them. When the present body is gone, animals will take on another body by drawing upon the storehouse of their past work (Sanchita Karma). Animals have no conscience hence they have no merit or demerit. They have obviously got intelligence, but there it ends. Only men can do fresh work, because they have got a conscience. They only have got the idea of bondage, which other creatures have not. Only when there is the idea of bondage, can there be any real effort for Liberation. Don't you see how a prisoner struggles for release? It is only when there is the idea that the world is a bondage, that a man can strive for Liberation. His failure to understand this takes him through the endless cycles of births and deaths.

¹ A line from Ramprasâd

“You of course, know the story of a bird called Homâ which Sri Ramakrishna used to relate. As soon as the young bird is hatched and has its eyes opened and sees that it is falling to the ground it straight-way flies up. Therein lies the way to safety. There are men also, who, as soon as they are conscious of their position go straight up.

“Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘The granny likes the play to go on.’ I said to him ‘But what of that? Why should I play?’ He at once rebuked me saying ‘Bah! How selfishly you talk! The whole bliss is in the continuance of the game. The granny dislikes those players who prefer to loiter about her. But she stretches forth her hand to one who after a vigorous play comes back to touch her. Haven’t you noticed how, in a game of dice, the expert player sometimes gives up an invulnerable position willingly? He plays again and by a few masterly throws gets back to his former position.’

“I asked him if this was possible. He answered ‘Yes quite possible. Must not a man believe in the infinite power of God? Can a man who, when a fish-bone gets stuck in his throat, touches the feet of a cat in humble supplication and makes obeisance to

a date tree dare deny God?¹ What do you mean? Well, you prattle about knowledge but He has subjected man to the curse of sleep which renders him so helpless that even a dog might kick him in that state and he not know anything of it!

“Ah, how forcibly he would impress things on us!”

News came just then that the Holy Mother's condition was gradually becoming critical. When the letter was read out to the Swami he remained grave for a few minutes and then said

“Everything in this world has a dissolution. You won't find anything in it that escapes this fate. Death is but another name for dissolution. The authors of our Sâstras say that everything that has an origin must die. A thing, according to the sage Yâska, is born, exists, grows, attains maturity, decays, and dies. Whatever has a birth—every creature, and plant too—is subject to this sixfold transformation. Do you find any departure from this rule anywhere? The authors of our Sâstras have pronounced the last word on this as on other allied subjects. Their doctrine of reincarna-

¹ The reference is to the belief that by such a conduct the person concerned gets rid of the bone

tion is very grand. The Christians have nothing corresponding to it. Their idea is that when a man dies and is buried his soul lives for a long time in that grave. Then on the Day of Judgment following the destruction of the world, Jesus Christ will take his seat on the right side of the Lord, the angels will take all the souls out of their graves, and those about whom Jesus will say 'I know them, will be sent to heaven while those of whom he will deny any knowledge shall have eternal damnation. What a dreadful thing! Many a lady in the West with naive faith, feels very miserable if her child dies before baptism. For the Protestants believe that one who is not baptized is doomed to eternal damnation after death. The Roman Catholics have a place called the purgatory through which they believe even the unbaptized souls can pass to heaven. How far Vedânta has saved the people of the West, well, they only know.

'About the doctrine of reincarnation they say that it is very logical, for there ought to be a chance for all. If one fails to attain the goal in a single birth, one can make up for it in the next, and so on. Here you have no idea what a revolution Swamiji has brought about in the world. He has changed

the entire thought-current of the West. The New Thought movement had its rise and full play just after his preaching those doctrines. Western philosophy can bear no comparison with Hindu philosophy. Our sages declared long ago the final conclusions on the subject.

“At Almora, the chief clergyman used to say to F, ‘The reason why we cannot make any impression on the Hindus is because of their philosophy.’ You can’t find anywhere a philosophy like ours.

“The authors of our scriptures reached unity, beyond which, of course, there is no progress. The more people are learning to think the more are they reluctant to accept the Bible. With Emerson there sprung a new sect in the West called the Unitarians. They, too, have a fine literature of their own. The Unitarians say ‘If Jesus is the son of God, so are we.’ Well, the great war has shown which way they are going in the West. Their only goal is enjoyment, and you know materialism can never lead to any permanent good.

“How beautifully has Tulsidâs expressed it. ‘Where the Lord is, there is no desire, and where there is desire, there the Lord is not. Both can never co-exist, like the sun and darkness.’ In Bengal, too, there has

recently grown up a party for combining Yoga and Bhoga—spirituality and materialism ”

One of the audience referred to an article in a magazine, refuting the idea expressed by Tulsidâs and attacking Sankara. He also referred to a letter published in another journal, seeking to harmonize spirituality and materialism. The Swami heard the letter read out to him, and at the end remarked

“I like the concluding portion of it. But the writer has no idea about Maya. The highest attainment of philosophy is the theory of Mâyâ. People won't study Sankara but would criticize him! There are two quotations from the Gîtâ in that letter and both are misquoted. What a good deal of worthless stuff they circulate along with a little that is good! But you see, they, too, have their appreciators among the people. To be frank, I cannot follow what they mean to say. Fools are not wanting who without understanding a bit of Sankara dare criticize him. What nonsense does the writer mean? Nowhere has Sankara said that we must all fly to the woods. He himself has done a world of good. Just study his life. We are all in the world, and where can we go, leaving it aside? But doing good to

the world is not an end in itself. The world will remain as it is. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, it is but a dog's tail, which won't straighten up. In trying to help the world you help yourself—you realize your Freedom. Whenever Sankara has argued, he has silenced all his adversaries with the greatest ease. But he himself was a worshipper of Sakti, in whom he had perfect belief. His very hymns prove this. It requires the finest intellect to understand Sankara and where this is wanting you have only childish prattle."

21st July

News came this morning of the Holy Mother's passing away. It cast a profound gloom upon the minds of all. The Swami also is in a reserved mood. He is, besides, indisposed, and has taken nothing till now. He has his usual audience in the room, but everyone is silent. The Swami broke the stillness with a Bengali song: " 'Listen, my mind, a whole load of guilt is on thy back—the legacy of thy evil actions.' Sorrow everywhere! I am seriously thinking of discontinuing idle talk, and observing silence. Of what use is it to talk unless one can speak what one really thinks?"

“Every day before our very eyes our term of life is wearing out and youth is decaying. Days once past never return and Time is crushing the universe. Fortune too is fickle like the play of ripples on the surface of the water, and life itself is brief like lightning. Therefore O Lord Thy refuge to all protect me who have taken shelter at Thy feet, before it is too late.

“There was a rich man at Muttra, who was in the habit of entertaining any new Sâdhu that came to the town. He would take him to his house and feed him with delicacies. When I went to Muttra, some Sadhus advised me to go to him, saying that there was a good arrangement for food and all that. So I went to him. There were other Sâdhus too. It is customary on such occasions for the host to discuss some spiritual topics with the Sâdhus after meal. So he asked me ‘Sir how can one get Vairagya (dispassionateness)?’ I at once replied, ‘Well, I could have told you that, if I had it myself. Had I possessed it, do you think I would have come to you begging for food?’ The reply greatly pleased the Sâdhus, who said, ‘You have answered beautifully.’ The man, too, did not ask any further questions.

‘Everywhere you find selfishness, and nothing but that Take, for instance my own case I say, and think too, that perhaps I am free from selfishness But it is there, all the same Great Lord !’

25th July

A Bengali youth Vaisya by caste has recently come to Benares leaving home He has put on the ochre cloth of his own accord His mother is living When he had asked her permission to renounce the world, she had told him that she only liked to see him happy, whatever path he chose The youth has come to meet the Swami

Hearing all about him the Swami said “Vairâgva is indeed a great thing Your mother, too, does not oppose your inclinations You are unmarried, and have got very few ties in the world You are young and healthy, and your physique, too, indicates self-control Those who are sexually pure take some fifty years to root out the sex-impulse, while those who have led an indifferent life take several lives to do it It is such a difficult task ! You have put on the ochre cloth So people of all the four castes will bow to you and this means spiritual harm Give up the ochre cloth As for

initiation it must be taken up by a very competent man, otherwise it produces no results. And what is it more? A vision of the Lord that appears to you—you may take up whole-heartedly and that will serve the purpose. Pray to Him sincerely and He will provide everything. It is because I feel interested in you that I advise you particularly.

“Look here. As your mother is intent on your happiness, so you too, should try to make her happy. Go home, and try to please your mother. We are all apt to forget that we, too, have been babes. We seldom think of the helpless state in the mother's womb. See how the just-born kid has found out its mother's milk unaided! How quickly it learns to frisk about and nibble the grass it lives upon—all with its own effort! Man alone is so helpless! If the mother fails to cover it even for a short time it is done for!

“The ideal must be very high, but it is wrong to form an inordinate estimate of one's own powers. Our powers increase as we prove our fitness.

“Embracing the monastic life is not a joke. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘That man alone is fit for the monastic life who can

allow himself to fall from a palmyra tree without moving his limbs. Is that an easy thing? Don't you see how we are trammelled with a hundred ties? Go home and serve your mother. It will benefit you spiritually."

26th July

Swami "The Gîtâ is a splendid book. Though it is a Smṛiti, it is often classed among the Upanishads, for it contains all their essential teachings. Haven't you noticed how under each chapter, is written, 'In the Upanishad of the Gîtâ' &c? The Gîtâ is called 'Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītāpanishad'. Therefore the sages have said, 'A single plunge in the waters of the Gîtâ removes the dirt that has accumulated from birth to birth'. The body and the mind have been stained with the dirt of countless past lives, and it is all washed away by a bath in the waters of the Gîtâ. It won't do merely to have a superficial knowledge of the book, you must dive deep. You will understand the Gîtâ all the better if you first go through the Upanishads."

The Swami got animated as he spoke on the Absolute state and allied topics, and suddenly looking at those present said,

“Therefore the poet declared ‘May it never fall to my lot to talk about poetry to one who is innocent of it’ Everybody felt ashamed at heart for having achieved so little in life, and kept quiet. The Swami broke the tension of the moment by changing the topic. He said ‘It is refreshingly cool now. Oh what a dreadfully hot weather we have just passed through!’ Atmospheric heat and cold are not things of a permanent nature. They come and pass away. Haven’t you read in the *Gītā* ‘It is the contact with sense-objects, O Arjuna, that gives rise to the sensations of heat and cold, of pleasure and pain, these are subject to origin and destruction. So you must bear them.’ Since these are mere sensations, the Lord advises us to put up with them. You know Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘In the (Bengali) alphabet each sound is represented by one or at the most, by two letters, but there are three letters in the S group’¹ This means that we must bear and forbear. He who does this survives but he who does the opposite surely comes to grief.”

¹ The letters ष, श्, and स are pronounced in the same way in Bengali. The imperative of the Sanskrit root सृज् to forbear has for its Bengali equivalent स, which is also pronounced as one of these letters.

What a terrible heat we have had, and now it is so cool! A sea is no more than a mud-puddle when you have crossed it. All anxiety and trouble are at the initial stage.

After a short pause he continued, "It is a very difficult task to speak, for the same statement is variously understood by different people, and sometimes they are found to suffer in consequence. Real monks and sages never say anything to cause any pain to others. They therefore make only general statements that are calculated to help humanity. Still you must have noticed how troubles arise over them. It is not everybody that appreciates humour, one has to speak guardedly.

"Ah, what a fund of humour we found in Sri Ramakrishna! It was unique. One day Keshab Babu was to call at Dakshineswar. Even before the appointed time, Sri Ramakrishna put on a red-bordered cloth, covered his body with a decent *châdar*, and with his lips crimsoned by the chewing of betel, began to pace the verandah of his room in expectation of Keshab. When Keshab saw him in that state he remarked, 'Ah, today you have dressed yourself with extraordinary care. What is the matter?' 'Why,' replied Sri Ramakrishna smiling,

'today I have to charm Keshab' That was all this trimming' At this Keshab began to laugh

'Swamiji also was very humorous. But his humour was nothing in comparison with Sri Ramakrishna's, which used to create splendid laughing. He would say 'I keep people in the right mood by introducing secular topics now and then. Once a Brâhmo devotee referred to Keshab Chandra Sen and Pratap Mazumdar, in their very presence, saying that they were like Gaurânga and Nityânanda. Sri Ramakrishna was close by. Keshab asked him 'What then are you?' Sri Ramakrishna at once replied, 'I am the dust of your feet'. At this Keshab said, 'He is never to be caught napping.'

"It was Sri Ramakrishna who taught the Brâhmos to salute in the proper fashion. The idea of the motherhood of God was also his gift to the Brâhmo Samâj.

"Every word of Sri Ramakrishna was instinct with a wonderful power. He used to snatch the hearts of people, as it were. The Americans like heart-to-heart talk very much. It is much more effective with them than lectures."

Gradually the talk drifted on to devotion and devotees

Suami "There is a story about Śiṣya and Parvatī. One day, at Mt Kailas, they were playing at dice, when Śiva broke off in the midst of the game and went out. But He returned immediately, and so Pârvatī asked Him the reason for this sudden exit and return. Śiva answered, 'Well a devotee of Mine, having fallen among some robbers, at first took refuge in Me. But before I reached the spot, I found that he had himself taken up a stone to throw at the robbers. At this I came away.' The Lord's grace doesn't manifest itself unless one absolutely resigns oneself to Him. It is no easy thing to surrender oneself to the Lord, and that wholeheartedly. They say that a devotee always beholds the Lord. It is quite true. In the Bible it is written 'For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.' All this is very true. Just look at the question broadly, from the standpoint of our physical health, for instance. A man who has a good health improves by degrees, and little irregularities seldom affect him. But a man in bad health may take all pre-

cautions possible and yet fail to maintain his already poor health. A slight irregularity tells upon him badly. This is the case everywhere. It is a law of nature.

"But there is another side of the question. The Lord is the protector of the humble—then friend and helper. It is however very difficult to be humble. Humility does not come so long as there is any egotism left. Sri Ramakrishna would often tell of the sweeper woman. Well, her work is as you know, the lowest that could be imagined but no sooner does she possess an ornament than her vanity knows no bounds. Don't you see there is an ocean of difference between the lowness of position due to worldly circumstances and the humility of a devotee—that meekness of spirit which leads him to consider himself lower than even a blade of grass? 'Thou art guiding me by the hand, O Lord'—this is no mere poetry.

"In the Gîtâ we have 'They speak of an eternal Aswattha tree (i.e. relative existence) rooted above and branching below, whose leaves are the Vedas, he who knows it is a knower of the Vedas.' You see, there is no mention here of the Brahman. How then can a man be a knower of the Vedas by simply knowing this relative

existence.' Well, let us see. 'Rooted above means emanating from the Paramâtman, and 'Aswattha' means that which will not last till tomorrow, i.e. transitory. So the meaning of the verse comes to this. 'One who has known relative existence to be such—that is has definitely understood its transitoriness—is a knower of the Vedas.' Isn't it all right now?"

Repeating the next sloka he pointed out that one must have dispassionateness to cut off that tree of relative existence. Then he went on to the next verse. " 'Then that Goal is to be sought for, going whither the wise return no more.' Isn't it so? But here a difficulty seems to present itself. How is it that they return no more? Don't we hear it said that we have all come from Brahman? How then can we help returning from that to this relative plane again? When we have once come down from a state of union with the Absolute, isn't there every chance of our returning again to the relative plane, after our attaining to that in this life?"

The Swami answered the question indirectly, by referring to the case of the Adhikârîka beings, that is, those entrusted with the management of the world. He said

"Then case is different. They come with perfect knowledge from the previous birth. It is only they who can come over again into a state of union with Brahman. For this purpose they allow some little trace of desire to remain in their mind.

"What is that 'Eternal Goal' like? Ah, how beautifully the Lord puts it. 'That in sun does not illumine, nor the moon, nor fire. That is My Supreme Abode, going whither they return no more.'

"In the life of everyone there comes satiety after a prolonged enjoyment of sense-objects. If at that time one happens to come in contact with a saint, one advances towards the goal. Dispassionateness first originates by seeing the evil clinging to sense-objects. Until a man begins to see the dark side of life, no spiritual advice is of any avail to him."

27th July

"In Samâdhi there is complete destruction of the mind, but it must be the Nirvikalpa

So in one sense they are not wholly merged in Brahman. Ordinary beings are absolutely unified with Brahman at the time of Videhamukti or dissolution of the body after Realization. So there is no more re-birth for them.

Samâdhi To transcend the mind is to manifest the intellect fully. It is not that the mind is altogether annihilated, but the mind which formerly had relations with the phenomenal world is gone. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the pure mind and the pure Self are one. The mind gets purified as soon as its worldly character is destroyed. A pure mind is that which, fully believing in the unity of Self, sees the same Atman in all and deals with them accordingly. In the Gîtâ and the Upanishads you will find that words like *धीर, आत्मवान्, प्रज्ञानधी* (meaning steady and well-balanced) are repeatedly used. Such a state comes when the mind has become pure."

28th July

Sauni At the time of death an outer power struggles with the inner power. These two powers are not different. They are like concentric circles, the bigger one trying to destroy the other. Once when I was at the point of death at Puri, I perceived this distinctly, as if I had one foot outside the door and another inside. I could see both sides. Death is no more terrible when there is no attachment. One must keep out attachment. All the trouble is due to love being

centred on specific objects. When you dive into the Ganges you don't feel any weight although there are tons of water overhead. But one feels so burdened when one places a pot of water on one's head! Even the spine may give way. You may love all the beings in the world and be not at all under bondage but the moment you allow your love to be centred on any special object, you are bound. If you can get rid of these loads then only can you attain to Peace and Liberation. Constant discrimination sharpens the intellect. Truth reveals itself to a man who is always discriminating to attain it. One must always keep the sword of discrimination ready at hand. The Lord says in the Gita that we must cut down the deep-rooted Aswattha (of Samsâra or the relative world) with the sword of non-attachment and seek to enter that blessed state from which there is no return.

"When the pigeon saw that all his mates had fallen into the trap, he was overcome with delusion, and allowed himself to follow suit. It is thus that men fall into delusion and die.¹ 'Such is the charm the Divine Enchantress has spread, that every-

¹ Story from Bhâgavata, Book XI, Ch. vii

one is caught in it Not to speak of petty creatures, even the Supreme-Gods like Brahmâ and Vishnu are intuated ' Not only the common run of men, even the Jnânis lose their heads, through the will of the Divine Mother "

He quoted from the Durgâ Saptasatî some verses showing how the Divine Mother through Her unthinkable power, projects maintains, and dissolves the universe, deludes even the greatest, and again, out of Her grace, confers liberation on people Then he said "If you succeed in purifying the mind, everything is set right The pure-minded have things pre-arranged for them in the external world They find everything ready for them

"When Swamiji went to America for the first time, I accompanied him from Mt Abu to Bombay In the running train, Swamiji said to me in all seriousness, 'Well, all that preparation that you see going on (in America) is for this (pointing to his own body) My mind tells me so You will see it verified at no distant date '

"Take for instance the case of Sri Ramakrishna The Kâlî Temple at Dakshineswar was kept ready for him All that arrangement was made for him beforehand "

8th Decemb

In the morning some members of the Order gathered about the Swami and he took dictation on to Swamiji (Sri 12 V 11 1930) and his message to the country.

Swami: 'As Swamiji would say, Religion is the very life of India. Ever since the beginning of time, India has been doing this and that, but not producing saints. India will have to preach religion throughout the whole world.' The words of Swamiji cannot but turn out true. India will surely rise again. Swamiji once remarked 'This time I have left nothing unsaid.' Yes, he has said everything and his ideas are now being worked out. The introduction of selfless service in the country by Swamiji is a wonderful thing. I believe India will surely rise. If we have not the good fortune to see that in our lifetime, it will come to pass later on. Otherwise the advent of personalities like Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji becomes meaningless. Swamiji prophesied many times about the future glorious mission of India in unmistakable terms, and his prophecy cannot prove false. There is already a good beginning.'

In the afternoon, a small audience gathered in the Swami's room, and there was the usual Bhâgavata class. After the

class the Swami said "There are three kinds of sins—sins committed through deeds, words, and thought. In consequence of these sins, men after death attain the inanimate state, are reborn as birds, beasts, and wretched creatures in the lowest strata of human society respectively.

"It is in the human body that the gates to Freedom open. So every man should be on his guard and make a good use of his life. Enjoyment is possible in other bodies also, but Freedom is not.

"Attachment to the body is the last and strongest bondage. The parental affection of monkeys is very great. The mother carries the dead body of her young one even after the flesh has dropped off and the skeleton alone is left. But even they, as all other animals, forget everything about their young ones when their own life is at stake."

20th December

Swami "By silent and continued prayer and meditation one should create in the mind a subconscious current, and it will go on working at all times—even in sleep. Not that one will have no dream, but the current thus generated will be supreme, working unperceptibly within. During this Sâdhanâ

one should not mix with too many persons or engage in useless talk "

21st December

Swami "Sri Ramakrishna used to say. A man will be born as many times as he has sex-connections ' And in each of these births there is a great likelihood of having that connection over again. So there is the endless round of births and deaths. The only remedy against that is to take refuge in the Lord and give up that clinging to flesh with a firm determination saying ' I won't do it again. In that case, all the sins done previously will be forgiven. But a person must not play the hypocrite. Then all the old sins will come down upon him and exact their dues with compound interest. A true devotee cannot have a permanent fall. Even if he falls, he is bound to rise again through the grace of the Lord. Eternal damnation! Nonsense! I do not believe it. God has His work done even by the apparent lapse of a devotee ' "

The conversation then turned to compassion and attachment

Swami "There is a gulf of difference between compassion and attachment. A

Sadhu must have compassion and not attachment—the idea of ‘me’ and ‘mine’, for that is the root of all bondage. The Master had great love for Swamiji and others like him, for he could see a greater manifestation of Divinity in them than in others. He was fully conscious of that so there was no fear of bondage in his case.

“Even saints may slip and become bound, as for instance, Jada Bharat¹. Self-exertion is needed to snap the bondage. It is self-exertion that brings about quick results, otherwise there is no knowing when success will come. ‘Last birth’ means that one will realize God in this very life. Ignorance is without beginning, for one cannot trace its origin.

“Once Girish Babu put the question to the Master, ‘Why have you to practise so

Jada Bharat was a great monarch in one of his previous births. In that birth when he retired in his old age from the duties of the King to lead a life of contemplation in a forest he became attached to the young one of a deer which had lost its mother. As a result he turned away from God and in his next birth was born as a deer. In his birth after that he was again born as a man and attained realization. In this last birth he was known as Jada Bharat for he lived as one inert and idiotic for fear of getting bound again by worldly ties.

hard? The Master replied 'You know there is eternal union of Hara (Siva) with Gauri. Still, why did she practise so much Tapasyâ? All that was as an example to others. If I do so much others will do at least one-sixteenth part of it.' Is it not so?

22nd December

The conversation was about the supreme knowledge.

Swami "Words of supreme knowledge carry no meaning to an ordinary man with a limited vision. Through discrimination the ordinary sense-knowledge vanishes. Take for example this house. It is nothing but a conglomeration of atoms, so is the body. Discrimination pushed further will reduce even the atoms to one entity—the Absolute Existence. As Sri Ramakrishna would say 'The palmyra tree is true and not its branches or fruits, for they drop off. Brahman alone is real, the world is changing. Taken as a whole, it is Brahman that comes to be true. Knowledge is, so long as ignorance is. In fact, when ignorance goes away knowledge also vanishes with it. Knowledge is simply a means to an end and not the end itself. It is Brahman alone that exists. When we say that Brahman is Absolute Existence-

Knowledge-Bliss we do not mean that Brahman is actually that, but that that is the nearest approximation. Brahman is not untruth, it is not ignorance, it is not misery. To explain this, Brahman is described as Absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. But, truly speaking, Brahman is beyond the reach of words and thought.

“There is a place even in this body, where the mind being pitched, one can perfectly be at ease. What is required is a change of the angle of vision. There is no escape from trials and difficulties by flying from them.”

25th December

The talk this day was on retirement. It had been introduced as a spiritual discipline by the Swami at the Sânti Asrama, California, U S A, when he had been there.

Swami “The American devotees coming up and living there used to call it ‘talking with the Self’. It helped them much spiritually and they used to acknowledge it. But it was a rule that none was to remain with himself for more than three days. Once a lady, Miss B——, retired without my knowledge. I myself was then living like that, occupying an outhouse of the Asrama at a distance. G—— was the only other male

inmate at that time and he used to bring me a cup of tea, a little toast, etc. for my food. Of course, I made an exception in my case and was to be in retirement for a week. That lady made up her mind to be in seclusion for a week and observe the vow of silence and constant meditation with scanty food like myself. The seclusion soon became too much for her, and she was about to be out of her mind. I was then observing the vow of silence in my solitary cell. But something like a premonition told me that an untoward event was going to happen. I felt uneasy and had to come out on the fifth day of my retirement. Miss B—— was being served by a young woman. Her condition was really serious. I sent for her, and when she came I gave her a good scolding. She admitted her mistake and begged to be pardoned. I was thinking of asking her to go away. But afterwards finding that she was repentant I let her remain.

“She herself said afterwards, ‘I was about to die. Had I not been made to come out I would have actually died.’ The lady was a woman of exceptional parts. For fourteen years she had been a platform speaker addressing various audiences. At the age of sixty-two she had founded an institution

called 'The Home of Truth' and had conducted it for some years. But she was very conceited.

"There were many like her, distinguished, but self-opinionated. Of course, they were all sincere. They would wonder and say 'Swami! How can you manage to keep together so many conflicting temperaments and train them?' We watch carefully every movement of yours, but find nothing defective in your conduct. This is as it should be. To manage an organization well, one must behave like a mother, full of love and consideration.

"I was so sorry to hear that K—— had left the Order. At the Sânti Asrama I had similar experiences. Many times I had to scold the inmates. K—— was ill on the eve of his departure. He pined for home and wanted to be served as tenderly as at home. Of course, he did not get that treatment and went away. It is not unnatural that a novice should think like that when he falls ill. But as he grows old in wisdom and experience he learns to adapt himself to his environment and to the rigid life of a Sâdhu.

"What is needed is love. Even beasts appreciate it. It cannot be that a sensible

being like man will not understand it 'Who does the lamb love Mary - Because Mary loves the lamb ''

28th December

A householder devotee and a few monks of the Mission were present before the Swami. The devotee was talking about the visions of his brother-in-law who used to see his chosen Deity in dream or meditation and was commissioned to worship his wife as mother. But the wife being of a different temperament would not let him.

Swami "Tell your relative to pray to the Lord, and He will charge the mind of his wife.

'His work is going on all right. We know very little of His Lîlâ. In how many ways does He help man and push him forward. At first He presents supernatural phenomena before him and thus strengthens his faith. In short, whatever is done by Him is for the good of all ''

Then the talk was about service.

Swami (Turning to S) "To serve creatures as God is a grand thing. But mere theorizing will not do. It must be done practically, so that it may help one to

the realization of the Ideal—the manifestation of the Divine potentialities. Those who profess to be the children of Śrī Ramakrishna must have Yoga Bhakti, Karma, Jnâna, nay, everything. For, Śrī Ramakrishna stands for the synthesis and harmony of all religious paths. The spiritual growth of a person following a particular line was the rule in the past. But now one should have an all-round development combined with a magnanimity of heart to tolerate others'.

From this the conversation drifted on to self-surrender.

Swami (Addressing N) "We can be at perfect peace if we can resign ourselves to the Lord. Let Him do what He thinks best. It is foolishness to dictate terms to Him as regards His dealings with us. Once you have surrendered yourself at His feet, there should be no room left for the assertion of your individual will. He knows what is best for you. Even if you pray for what is not desirable, He will do the right thing by you."

31st December

It was the birthday of the Holy Mother, and many devotees were present in the Swami's room. Referring to the recent pain he had in his toe he remarked "There is

no knowing why such a thing happens or why it increases or decreases. People hazard some patchwork of an explanation, but everything in the universe there is a great Divine Mother. I have realized that behind everything in the universe there is a great Power at work. And She is all good. Even the worst suffering a man undergoes is due to Her will. And it is ultimately for his good, for such suffering removes countless past impressions from his mind.

“Man has to his credit the actions of many previous births, which must work themselves out. Nothing particularly wrong has been committed in this life. But there are the accumulated sins of many past lives. These sufferings are due to them.”

X “It might also be a case of vicarious punishment.”

Swami “Yes, some people argue that way also. Formerly I had not much belief in such a theory—that one suffered for the sins of another. Now I fully believe in it. One can easily increase the happiness or decrease the misery of another. The extent to which one can so help another depends upon one’s spiritual powers. The lives of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother have strengthened my belief.”

3rd January, 1921

Swami "The great power of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji is at the back, so the work of the Mission is going on smoothly and new recruits are coming

"Nowadays I advise all to stick to their posts. One must stay somewhere. So it is best to continue where increased experience will give greater facilities for work."

4th January

The Swami was reading *Vichitra Jagat* (The Wonderful World) by the late Principal Ramendra Sundar Trivedi. Eulogising the author he remarked

"One can explain a thing if only one has a clear grasp of it, which is the outcome of concentration. Better still is meditation. At Srinagar I used to meditate on the Upanishads. It was a charming occupation. In this way eight Upanishads (the first eight) were committed to memory. What is meditation but absorption in a subject? By concentrating on a subject, its inner secrets are revealed.

"First you have to prepare the mind. After that, any subject to which you may apply it will stand explained. The method

of controlling the mind is by seriously watching it for some length of time. It can be done both by love and by discipline, according to circumstances. The mind should be under your control—it must not be allowed to ride on you, for then the tables will be turned.

“Even the least attachment for anything gives the mind a loop-hole to direct you as it pleases. You become a slave to it which is not the case if you are unattached. Lust, attachment, and the like are one and the same thing, varying only in intensity. Therefore first control the senses, O Arjuna, and conquer lust which destroys one’s knowledge and realization’ (Gītā). One must turn the mind away before it gets attached to any object. Otherwise it becomes an impossible task afterwards.”

Referring to a noted person the Swami observed: “What will mere words do if there is no character behind them? That is the great stumbling-block for all. Sri Ramakrishna would say: ‘Almost all have been caught in the snare of sex-attraction. Only a few have been saved by the Divine Mother.’ It is a most dreadful attachment. People are all right so long as they do not come under its influence. A man under

its spell can stoop to anything 'Lust and gold,' and 'the palate and sex-impulse' are short expressions denoting the same thing. If one gives up these enjoyments, one verily renounces the world. One who can do this indeed sets at naught the whole world."

6th January

Swami "The world is a dreadful place. Only falsehood reigns here. For a Sâdhu truth is everything. If he gives up truth he can progress no more. Innocent lies are untruths all the same."

8th January

Referring to somebody's slackness regards truth the Swami said "Truth is God. Falsehood is Mâyâ. One gets everything by holding on to truth. Sri Ramakrishna taunted Pandit Sivanath Sastr with the words, 'You are all such sane people, but how can you speak an untruth?' You call me insane, but never does an untruth escape my lips!" Wishing to keep the incident of the Kâlighât priest's kicking him a secret, the Master asked Hriday (his nephew) to elicit from him a promise not to mention it to anybody. Hriday at first

objected. But Sri Ramkrishna made him
 elicit the promise from him three times and
 then remarked, 'Now it will never escape my
 lips.' For the good of the priest he thus
 put himself under a vow to observe silence
 on the matter.

He once had an engagement with Sri J. J. Mallick. But he forgot about it being
 engrossed in conversation with a number of
 visitors. At 11 P.M., when he was about to
 retire for the night, he suddenly remembered
 it. Immediately he had a lantern lighted,
 and accompanied by Swami Brahmananda
 went to the garden. Finding the gate
 closed, he put one foot in and shouted
 'Here I have come.' He had given up
 everything, but could not give up truth.

'It is a tremendous ordeal to abide by
 truth. A good deal of sacrifice is needed.
 To keep something secret, saying 'I won't
 tell it'—is also a kind of untruth. To be
 absolutely frank and open in one's dealings
 is real truthfulness.

"How dreadful is this realm of Mâyâ!
 What stormy billows on it! One can watch
 it calmly only if one succeeds in removing
 oneself from it, is non-attached. Otherwise
 there is a great danger. But it is very
 difficult to remove oneself from it."

9th January

Suami (To one who wanted to leave Benares) "Do not be restless Only the other day you came from Calcutta If you go now it will be setting a bad example Control the mind, be not controlled by it Surrender yourself to Him alone your everything—your body, mind, and soul O my Mind-bird, why fly from tree to tree tasting different fruits? Have thy eternal nest on One who can offer thee the Greatest Fruit ' "

The conversation then turned on the power of the Mantra

Suami "Yes, one can cure disease by the power of mystic formulas But by His will, I have learnt to have greater faith in Him Who is at the back of that power "

D "Kindly make my mind free from sex impulse "

Suami "Look to the Atman, not to the body Practise fixing the mind always on the Atman 'One gets attached to objects by constantly thinking of them From attachment comes longing, and from longing anger ' "

"Anger is a concentrated form of lust It makes one lose one's head completely Lust

does not so absolutely overwhelm the mind. Never think of transient things. That way you can escape attachment.

"Once in America, a lady came to see me. I at once divined her mind and asked her if she had anything to tell me. She was very glad that I understood her. She told me that her husband was very sensual but she herself had not the least inclination for that sort of life. She said, 'I allow my husband freedom to go to whomsoever he likes, only let him not trouble me.' To that I replied 'You are very nice.' You started life together, and now you want to drive him away! Live with him and try to reform him by your advice.' She burst out into tears at my words—she understood. And though for a time they lived together, she could not hold on to the last she separated but never married again.

"In America men work very hard they necessarily seek enjoyment of the senses. And they have no other idea of enjoyment than that. Hence it is that they are so excessively lustful. The women labour less and some are intellectual. Therefore perhaps they have less of the sex impulse.

"While there, I was once repeatedly sent for by a woman. She was the mistress of a man

who was a perfect rogue and would not allow her to go out. She begged me earnestly to go and see her once. She persuaded the man to allow my visit. He agreed on the express understanding that the interview would take place in his presence. He sat a little apart, and the woman came out of her room and shook hands with me. I stood up and holding her hand in mine for about five minutes, I *willed* that her mind be purified and have pure tendencies. We then sat down and chatted for some time on spiritual topics without minding in the least the presence of the man. The man became furious and exclaimed, 'You should know this is America.' 'What of that?' I said, 'I know it is America.' The effect of this visit was astonishing. The woman overcame his influence and having extricated herself from him lived apart. She had said after the handshake, 'I am filled, my difficulties are solved. I feel that I am pure, I have known what womanhood means.'

"The Lord endows religious teachers with a special power which descends through a succession of disciples. Or why, if they are only like common men, should people seek them? It is to do His work that He so endows the preachers. But if they utilize

the power for selfish purposes, they are deprived of it. Other powers such as oratory may remain, but the saving power departs from them. The power survives even after the completion of the work for which God granted it. Only it wanes a little. But by misuse it is completely lost. Oh, the tremendous will power I used to feel then! It is all His wondrous play!"

He quoted from the sixth chapter of the *Gîtâ*, interspersing the recitation with beautiful and illuminating comments.

"Through whatever reason, the restless unsteady mind wanders away, let him curbing it from that, bring it under the sway of the Self alone."

"With unflagging perseverance the mind must be again and again brought back to the Atman. It is the nature of the mind to be fickle and restless, like a naughty child that has to be pulled back by the ear to its studies. The mind must be carried even beyond the *Buddhi*, the determinative faculty, directly to the Atman. Of course, repeated and incessant efforts are necessary, but the mind at last will come under your control and remain calmly fixed on the Atman. At first you are to transcend *Tamas*, then *Rajas*, and finally you are to go beyond even *Sattva* itself.

Then you realize the Self as pervading everything. You find that He alone exists, and nothing else. And that is called the state of Transcendental Consciousness.

“The senses, the mind, and the intellect—we shall have to capture all these outposts of consciousness, and thus conquer lust. Lust, anger, and avarice—these are but different forms of the same thing. They are the eternal enemies of the Jnâni, and destroyers of knowledge and wisdom. Join the senses to the Lord. That is the way to teach the senses a lesson.”

D referred to Sri Ramakrishna's bringing about sudden transformations in the lives of drunkards and sensual men. At that the Swami said: “Yes, these are all true. To some, however, he would allow an interval. ‘Enjoy yourself,’ he would say to them, ‘you won't croak long now that you have been bitten by a poisonous serpent.’”

‘If you are in touch with the Atman, you are safe.’

11th January

Swami: “Last evening I had a rise of temperature. My attendants had at first concealed it from me and declared it was

99 2° When the truth was out they excused themselves by saying that they had read it wrongly 'Where ignorance is bliss it is folly to be wise' But ignorance is never beneficial Knowledge is the only real thing And as Gaudapâda says, when Knowledge comes, all duality vanishes It is this dual consciousness which is at the root of all evils With the destruction of duality, all fear departs 'The sense of duality is the father of all fear' 'Verily, O Janaka, hast thou attained to fearlessness!'

"It is no use reading the scriptures unless you practise what they say The Books have been there from time immemorial' During our wanderings in the Kangra valley, Mahâraj (Swami Brahmananda), and myself—I was then about twenty-six years old—met a Sâdhu aged about forty-two, very sincere and unsophisticated He said 'I have been studying Vedânta for the last sixteen years But even now the sight of a woman relaxes my self-control, just as the thought of tamarind makes the mouth water!' He was quite right What is there in a *book*?

"Chandâsoka, highly enraged with a man pursued him sword in hand The man sought refuge in a monastery and the Abbot, though fully conscious of the risk, granted

him asylum. When Asoka came and enquired about the man, the Abbot admitted that he was there—he could not tell a lie. ‘Surrender him to me,’ said the Emperor. ‘No, sir,’ came the bold reply. This made him so furious that Asoka at once lifted his sword to strike him. To the great wonder of the Emperor, the monk stood his ground unflinching without the faintest sign of fear or movement of muscle. The Emperor asked him, ‘How is it that you do not quake before death?’ ‘Why should I? *Whose* death do you mean?’ And thus they discussed, and at last Chandâsoka became Dharmâsoka. For the Emperor had keen intelligence, and he understood.

“Vedânta as prevalent in some parts of the Punjab is of a loose sort. ‘I am Brahman’, they say, and go on doing all sorts of things as if these did not affect them. Discrimination, according to them, is not a sign of Knowledge. Even the womankind hold this view. And sometimes vile things are done in the name of Vedânta.

“You know the story of a Sâdhu who came to live in the Panchavati at Dakshineswar. Gossip went round about his character, and it reached at last the ears of Sri Ramakrishna. And when he remonstrated with him, the

Sâdhu said, 'If the world is unreal, are my slips of character alone real?' Sri Ramakrishna replied, 'I spit upon such knowledge as thine!' Falsehood should never be allowed to flourish

"The common man takes to those activities which tend to perpetuate the bond of attachment. And this is true of the whole world. The only exceptions are the Sâdhus, who have found out the evanescence of the world and renounced it. Knowledge dawns when discrimination is perfect."

12th January

Saami "How difficult to hold the mind for ever above the world! It wants to come down. It is indeed very hard to escape the grip of desires. As Sri Ramakrishna would say 'Even he who has no one to call his own rears up a cat and creates homely attachments.'

"Realization!—Ah, how wonderful it is! The mere thought of the Lord fills one with joy—who can measure the bliss of seeing Him face to face?"

"In the ocean of Brahman filled with the nectar of Absolute Bliss, what is to be shunned and what accepted, what is other (than oneself) and what different? I do not see or

hear or know anything in this I exist as the Self, the Eternal Bliss—distinct from everything else ’ ’

14th January

Apropos of the Bhâgavata class held yesterday, the Swami said “What a fine advice Prahlâda gave to his companions ! He says . ‘Worship the Lord even from childhood This body is extremely despicable, the saving grace is that it helps realization of the Lord ’ And how boldly he declared to his father that none had taught him to love God, neither his teachers nor even he himself ! This love of God, he says, is attainable only through the grace of the devotees The father exclaimed, ‘Who is this ? He will be my death, I fear Even Brahmâ and Vishnu quake before me, but he argues fearlessly with me ! Kill him !’

“Perhaps you are thinking that it is fictitious No, it is all true Prahlâda is not dead, he still lives He lives in every devotee’s heart, in yours and in mine When such stupendous efforts failed to kill him, how can he ever die ? Did he not realize himself as pervading everything ? Read the Vishnu Purâna, there you will find that his monistic

consciousness made even blocks of stones float on water !

“An excellent book again is the *Chandī* ! The philosophy of the *Chandī* has established the unity of Brahman and Sakti. ‘She the Divine Mother is the Absolute and yet the relative in the form of the universe. She pervades everything. Mahāmāyā has veiled everyone with delusion that Her play may continue undisturbed. She vouchsafes both worldly enjoyment and spiritual emancipation. Such is the theme of the book. King Suratha and the merchant Samādhi worshipped the Mother for three years before they realized their desires.

“How is it that we *know*, and yet cannot *act*? This is due to Her *Māyā*. She must be propitiated. ‘She being propitiated grants the boon of Freedom.’ Ave, without Her grace, no man can get out of this net-work of illusion. Only through worship can the common man realize the supreme beatitude, the state of universal consciousness. There is no other way.

“Speak to others even as you speak to yourself. That is to say, know every one as your own self. Do you ever get angry with yourself? Even so behave with others. But that would be possible only when you see your

own self existing in others This is the spirit which underlies Swami's doctrine of the worship of the poor, the forms of Nârâyana Indeed, there is a plane of consciousness where everything appears as one's own self And when one reaches that plane, there is no more any confusion for him "

The conversation then turned on Babu Ishan Ch Mukherji's wonderful charities Ishan Babu was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, and Sri Ramakrishna had asked him to renounce those beneficent works and direct his whole mind to God

Swami "Even in such charities, there is a subtle selfishness He doubtless had an eye on fame That is why he could act as an umpire or leader Very difficult indeed is unselfish work !"

N "The work that we (the monks of the order) do—is it not also selfish in that way? Some say that we work driven by our own inclinations "

Swami "True, you are guided by your own inclinations, but done in the right spirit, your work will bear an exactly opposite fruit to what will accrue from selfishness "

N "Some are doubtful whether our works are really Sri Ramakrishna's works "

Swami "Then why do they work? The

distinction that the works are Swami's and not Sri Ramakrishna's is irrational. Swami did not preach even a single idea of his own. Bold indeed must be he who would differentiate between Swami and Sri Ramakrishna !

"Some look upon these works as inferior to meditation. They do not know what they say. What is meditation ? Why is it so highly looked upon ? Because it is the way to the soul's union with God. Now let us see what Swami who initiated the works meant. Did he ask you to merely attend on the patients or to worship Nârâyana in and through them ? How then is this worship of Nârâyana different from meditation ? It may be one cannot serve in this spirit, but one has no right therefore to call it inferior. Swami proclaimed this new path after realizing the Self as immanent in all things. But people do not understand it and so want to move in the old grooves of spiritual practice. Three days of such service done in the right way will bring about spiritual realization. Such indeed has been the experience of everyone who has tried it. K— has told me that in those days when he was working in the hospital, he would always feel highly lifted up in spirits. Is not every man God Himself ? 'The Lord abides in every heart.' If one fails

to realize this, it is one's own fault, none else's

“Once when I made known to Sri Ramakrishna that my life's ideal was to attain Nirvâna, he reproved me for entertaining such a low ideal. He said ‘The ordinary man yearns for Nirvâna. Have you not seen in a game of dice how cautiously the neophyte moves his pieces, keeping them in pairs to escape being checkmated, and how anxious is he to reach ‘home’! But the expert takes no caution. He deliberately turns down his pieces even when very near ‘home’ so that the play might go on. And the dice become so attuned in his hands that he can cast any number he likes. Yes, the ‘expert’ remains in the world and yet enjoys its fun.’ I was extremely astonished at the statement, and on my expressing a doubt, he reassured me that it was quite possible through the grace of the Mother. ‘She graciously makes the dice so attuned,’ he said metaphorically.”

N “You once told us that the joy of one day's company with an Incarnation was enough compensation for the sufferings of a whole life.”

Suami “Yes, it is true. An hour of congregational singing in the company of the Master used to fill us with such an exuberant

joy that we would feel transported, as it were into an ethereal region. But now even meditation fails to evoke that celestial bliss or even a semblance of it. That bliss would abide in us for a week continually. We used to feel intoxicated, though we did not know the why or how of it. Who will believe it? It is difficult to convince anyone. Yet I must speak out.

“The ordinary man seeks Nirvana because he has suffered. But he does not know the tremendous joy there is in Divine communion.

“One day I arrived at the Dakshineswar Temple when the Master was taking his dinner. A number of cups containing various preparations were set before him. Someone may have thought these an unbecoming luxury, fit only for a Râjasic life. Sri Ramakrishna at once said, ‘Well, the tendency of my mind is ever towards the Infinite. It is by such Râjasic devices that I hold it down to the lower planes, otherwise I could not have talked with you.’ ‘How strange!’ I said to myself on hearing him, ‘others seek to attain Sattva by overcoming Rajas through rigorous discipline of food, whereas he has to forcibly check his mind from rising to the Sâttvic plane!’

“Out of infinite mercy, he once vouchsafed me the realization that every action and movement of his, nay, even his footfall was meant for the good of others

“People have only a superficial idea of the meaning of selfless action, not a clear grasp. For, if they are once convinced, how can they ever resist practising it? Only the self-deluded talk glibly of having understood it. Complete surrender to Truth is an indispensable condition of selfless action

“It is desires that obstruct spiritual realization. Could we but surrender ourselves wholly to Him! But no, we only partly rely on Him, and partly on our own effort lest He should not do the whole thing

(To R) “Tell us something about God ”

R “We can recite only from the Bhâgavata of the Kali Yuga! (He meant newspapers)”

Swami “Why do you think like that? How can there be any Kali Yuga for a devotee? (To others) R sometimes says very nice things. The other day he told me a dream of his. It seemed almost real and deeply impressed me ”

R, who was persuaded to recount it, said “I dreamt that Sri Ramakrishna was very

ill, and that the dissolution of his body was imminent. The disciples were very much cast down, and the Holy Mother was crying in an inner apartment. I had an idea in those days when I had this dream that a Divine Incarnation and man differed only in the degree of power. And as I stood before Sri Ramakrishna I thought within myself whether the love of his disciples could not induce him to preserve his body a little longer. No sooner had the thought crossed my mind than he said, 'Look here, there is a great difference between God and men. Do you know what men are like? They are like persons walking a short distance into the waters of the ocean, reaching at most to the breakers with extreme difficulty and then coming back.' And as he said this, I actually saw an infinite ocean spread before me, with men moving on the water, most of whom were very close to the sands, and only one or two had gone as far as the first breakers. Sri Ramakrishna continued, 'But God can cross it and return in a moment.' And at once I saw him cross the sea and come back! He then said to me, 'The mind of an Incarnation of God always tends towards the Infinite. Only a particle of His mind attends to the universe of which the devotees form a very minute

portion indeed How can they hold down my mind ?”

“The Holy Mother also used to say the same thing She once said ‘My mind always wants to soar into the Infinite I have to forcibly keep it down on a lower plane by various devices They talk of my attachments ! They do not know that I can in a moment sever all ties !’ ”

Swami “I heard a beautiful story relating to her, told by herself After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, she was once crying, when he appeared before her and said ‘How is it that you cry ? Do you think I am gone ? Here I am ! I have, as it were, passed from one room to another, that’s all You may not see me physically, but you *know* in many ways that I exist ’ ”

15th January

Swami was arguing in fun with D to prove the superiority of Bhakti over Jnâna He quoted from the *Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita* “ ‘The Jnâni, ignorant of the bliss of Divine love, like a crow tastes the margosa fruits of Jnâna But the devotee, knowing the mystery of Divine love, like a cuckoo tastes the mango-blossoms of Love ’ The margosa fruit is bitter to the taste, and being a

mature product of the tree, has no further development and soon withers away But the mango-blossom has a glorious future before it It will grow and ripen into a luscious fruit, it implies progressiveness

"Jnâna fully evolved becomes Bhakti Practice of Knowledge leads the mind higher and higher, beyond the bounds of duality But true Bhakti is its own end Wherever he be, the devotee is ever full of the nectar of love and bliss Divine

"Knowledge is necessary in the first stages of spiritual life to master the senses Afterwards it is one continuous enjoyment of the beatific love of God

"And how beautiful are these words of Thomas a Kempis 'Speak, O Lord, for Thy servant heareth Silence, all ye teachers! And silence, ye prophets! Speak Thou alone, O Lord, unto my soul!'

"'Come, O mind, let us evade lust and other passions, and live by ourselves' But how difficult to evade them! It is these which have made brutes of men!

"Sri Râmakrishna once asked a Pandit to discourse on some scriptural topic The Pandit went on for more than an hour expounding the doctrine of Tripitibheda (the dissolution of the difference between

knowledge, knower and the thing known)
At the end, Sri Ramakrishna remarked,
'Nicely indeed you have spoken But all I
know is that I have my Mother and I am
Her son ' "

21st January

The conversation turned on ancient civilizations T remarked that the Indian, Chinese, Egyptian and Persian civilizations were the most ancient

Swami "They hold that the present civilization of mankind is the outcome of the evolution of the amoeba I would tell the Americans that though we admit evolution, yet we hold that the civilized man has always existed I would challenge them to show a single civilization which did not result from contact with another civilization "

T "Yet, Mahârâj, the Hottentot is still the same Hottentot "

R "But it may be that a great man suddenly appeared amidst an uncivilized people and gave them light "

Swami "As a matter of fact, great men are never born like that Savage races are always found to have become civilized by contact with civilized races

"The highest ideal of civilization is the

realization of the Self as existing in all beings 'He who judges of pleasure and pain everywhere by the same standard as he applies to himself, that Yogi, O Arjuna, is regarded as the highest' That realization, however, comes only after Nirvikalpa Samâdhi "

B "But when a man has realized the Personal God in the Savikalpa Samâdhi, he finds Him abiding in everything Is not that also the realization of Universal Oneness?"

Swamî "There are stages in realization Swamiji used to say that India never felt the want of the Jivanmukta (the living-free) He said that he had himself seen at least fifteen or sixteen of them, and that even in the darkest days of India, spiritual giants were born "

R "Indeed, a land inhabited by three hundred millions of people—and by more in the past—persistently aspiring after spiritual realization, cannot know the want of such seers India is, as it were, the shrine of the world, and contemplation of God its principal occupation "

Swamî "It was the opinion of Swamiji that all heart and no brain is preferable to all brain and no heart He used to say that the heart does everything "

T "I do not believe in this theory "

Swami "You cannot build up life without the living touch of an ideal life The Bhâgavata is always insisting on the company of the good and the devout Sankara has no doubt laid particular stress on the Jnâna aspect But Vedânta upholds the necessity also of a spiritual teacher Life can be kindled only from another life "

T "Fortunately we have the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami and yourselves before us Thus we can know the true idea and the true significance of the scriptures

Swami "Indeed the lives of seers are the proof and demonstration of the scriptures "

24th January

One of the Swami's toe-nails had come off of itself Referring to this, he said, "Thus is the body left behind, and the soul flies off though, of course, not unperceived,—the mind, the ego feels its departure "The great elements, egoism, intellect, and also the unmanifested, the ten senses, desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, the body, intelligence, fortitude—these briefly described constitute the Kshetra (the Field) and its modifications The Kshetrajna (soul) alone is real, and its reality makes the Kshetra—the body, mind,

etc —appear as real In his last birth, man becomes conscious of the Truth, knows God and succumbs no more to egoistic delusions

“Attachment and aversion are at the root of all evil Hence the injunction to relinquish them For, free of them, one can do with impunity whatever one likes

“One attains Knowledge through the grace of the great sages ‘Through the grace of the great ones or of the Lord,’ says the scripture Then one feels a strong yearning for emancipation from the world, and the Cosmic Will makes circumstances favourable to him

“The Jiva is bound Like a tethered cow he is free to a certain extent only, not fully But he is emancipated if he utilizes that limited freedom in a proper way He does not do it, but rather abuses it in various ways

“Each man has his own world and sees the same Substance in a different way Realizing the Self in all things, one attains to Peace Eternal ”

26th January

Swami (Referring to D who was present)
“He is daily going down into Tamas, becoming more and more lazy in the name of

Sâdhanâ They think that inaction in itself is the ideal If it be so, why, then the wall also should be considered to have attained Samâdhi Should not one transcend all dualities? To maintain one's mental balance under all circumstances, to remain absolutely unmoved,—that indeed is the goal !

“ ‘Worship of Nârâyana’—how exquisite ! This is the characteristic of the present age Meditation and work both are excellent, if *properly* done They are equally good

“The idea once prevailed that Swamiji has preached differently from Sri Ramakrishna That idea is considerably discredited now Practice of medicine is bad if you seek remuneration Selflessly done, it leads to salvation They say that work binds Well, if it binds, it also unbinds What kind of meditation is this, half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening ! Must not there be an uninterrupted flow throughout the day ? Closing eyes for a few minutes and spending the remaining day in gossip ! One must try long and hard, only then can one have realization

“As you sow, so you reap If you want anything, start seeking it at once You may

not be able to do the best, but do as best as you can Now or never !”

2nd February

N— read out the first half of the Mundaka Upanishad At the end the Swami observed “Only the One exists, nothing else We see Him as men, animals, birds, insects plants, etc If we only think correctly, we shall find that there is no such differentiation in Him How we imagine an ego and slave for its gratification ! Each has his own world which accompanies him beyond death It is enjoyment and the desire for it that obstruct true Knowledge,—freed from them we can have Knowledge this moment Are we not Knowledge Itself ? But alas, it is so hard to renounce the joys of the world !

“Unless we are willing to understand none can convince us There was a king who promised the gift of half his kingdom to anyone who would teach him the preparation of puffed rice Many came and explained and demonstrated, but at the end the king would always say that he did not understand How could he ?—He simply *would* not ! We are also like him Who does not know that the world is transitory ? But we refuse to feel convinced lest we also have to give away

'half the kingdom'—the enjoyments of the world ”

N “But this hugging of sorrow, is it not also a sort of madness ?”

Swami “Yes, it is But as a spiritual discipline it has great value, it purifies the mind

“Merely saying ‘I am Brahman’ is no use as long as there is the least ignorance left in you You must worship God The Mother being pleased by worship grants both enjoyment and Freedom ‘Take refuge, O king, in Her, the Great Goddess Being propitiated, She grants both worldly prosperity and spiritual emancipation ’

“ ‘What if Brahmâ, Vishnu or Siva teaches thee? Unless thou forgettest everything, thou canst not be established in Self-realization ’

“ ‘The whole universe, being but an effect of Brahman, is in reality nothing but Brahman Its essence is That, and it does not exist apart from It He who says ‘it is’, is still under delusion—he babbles like one asleep’ ”

4th February

The Swami spoke enthusiastically on service and work

Swami "Work done in the spirit of service can lead one as surely to the Goal as meditation and Japa

"The *Gîtâ* read between the lines, is found to emphasize work. There is a deeper meaning behind its saying that the Jnâni has no work to do. It means that he has not, like the ordinary worker, any egoistic feeling attached to his work.

"All those old ideas that the Sannyâsin should renounce all works except begging, can no more satisfy us, especially after we have been enlightened by the life and teachings of the Master and Swami. They have thrown a new light on these things, they have given a new expression to the ancient light."

Hearing that a certain work was inconvenienced for want of a trained worker, Swami said, "Never mind. Do your best. Work yourself to death, if need be. Nothing but good will come of it."

"I am against our work being done by paid men. Better you wind it up. Go on working, ready to sacrifice even life for the Master's work. I am sure he will provide all necessary help in time. Do not worry."

“I do not at all like the idea of separating work from worship. Work is worship. All work is His service. I have seen that people who practise Tapasyâ in solitude often become selfish. But the worker has to mix and live with many for the sake of his work and has thus to cultivate patience, sympathy, love and selflessness. Besides Upâsanâ (worship) also is work, and its fruits also have to be dedicated to the Lord.”

11th February

Suami “I came to see me some time ago. He is a staunch believer in Purushakâra—free-will and free agency. I put the other side, that of destiny, before him. I said ‘We have seen both these aspects, and therefore look upon the Divine will as the stronger factor. You perhaps have not seen failure in life. That is why you are so emphatic about free-will.’ But he frankly and naively upheld his thesis. He came to congratulate us on our works of service. When I said that they were possible through the grace of God, he replied, ‘No, not through God’s will, but through your own efforts.’ He remarked that Sâdhus have brought ruin on the country by preaching Vairâgya! But he is a fine man and I like him.”

12th February

Swami (*Referring to Y*) "He wants to put by some money before retiring from the world. The idea of begging one's food frightens him. But then, his won't be true renunciation. 'Wander about living on alms.' Begging is holy, it teaches reliance on God. And one comes to feel that all places are His and that one gets only what and when He gives. One cannot otherwise get rid of fear and reliance on men.

"Some are alarmed at the idea of sharing their things with others. There was a Sâdhu who lived in a forest. To him once came a king seeking God, having renounced his kingdom. The Sâdhu became alarmed at this prospective partner of his daily bread. So he said to the king, 'You must give up all company. Go deeper into the forest where you will have perfect solitude.' The king took the words in an earnest spirit and left him and retired into the deep forest. In a short while there came a man bearing food for two persons, out of which he gave the usual portion of bread to the Sâdhu. The Sâdhu found that the man had reserved a gold dish laden with delicacies and asked him whom it was meant for. 'It is for him,' he replied,

‘who was a king’ The Sadhu flared up ‘What ! mere bread for me who am so old a Sâdhu and all these delicacies for a novice !’ The man said ‘I do not know anything But he who sent me has said that if you are not satisfied with the bread, you can take to the scythe’ The Sâdhu, before he renounced, had been used to mowing the grass The idea was that if he and the king did not feel content with their present life, they might go back to their old occupations, the Sâdhu to grass-moving and the king to his kingdom Why then should not the king be carefully served ?

“This is a fine story, profoundly significant

“It was in the first days of the Sânti Asrama The railway station nearest to the Asrama was fifty miles off, and the nearest neighbour, a postmaster, five miles away Water had to be carried up in barrels from a place three miles distant When I observed these conditions I felt extremely dejected How, I thought, could about fifteen people live in a place like this ? Anxious thoughts filled my mind in the morning At night I had a kind of vision in which I saw a mother-bird feeding her young one as described in the Chandi, and I was given to understand that the Mother

had pre-arranged everything. Next day came a friend of one of the party, who was a water-diviner.

"In the meantime I had a good rebuke from a lady member for my anxiety, who said that I had less understanding than even 'Baby' inasmuch as I had no faith in the Mother. 'Baby' was the name given by Swami to a very devout girl. The rebuke seemed to me to have come from Mother Herself. It so happened that the water-diviner returned after two hours' stroll in the Asrama grounds and reported that there were as many as three sources of water there. The nearest source was chosen, and he dug a little and discovered a fine spring of water. And thus everything was set right in the Sânti Asrama.

"It is He who is doing everything. Only the One exists, none else. It is extremely difficult to see 'the Atman in all things and all things in the Atman,' and 'God as existing equally in all beings.' We talk glibly about it and preach it to others. But how very hard to practise it! Everything is within us. Joy and sorrow have no objective existence. We project joy from within us and associate it with certain things.

"The Jnâni speaks and thinks of the 'I' as

identical with the Atman. We identify it with the body. To perceive the Divine in one's consciousness is nothing but merging the ego in the Atman. 'As pure water poured into pure water, becomes the same, so becomes the self of the sage, O Gautama who knows the unity of the Atman.'

"The Jnâni who has realized Oneness behaves in the world in the same way as we do when we happen to bite our tongue—we are not angry with the teeth. So long as we do not know the real nature of the image, we are deceived by it. But once we know its nature, we are no longer taken in, though we see it again and again. So also the Jnâni who knows the nature of the world is not deluded by it.

"The difference between the Savikalpa and the Nirvikalpa Samâdhi is one of degree of bliss, not of kind. For in both of them, the soul revels in God. The Nirvikalpa Samâdhi is full of the infinite joy of Self-knowledge. It is not a barren vacuity.

"When one has attained Liberation, one realizes the pure love without any ulterior motive. It is a love devoid of every thought of the power and glory of the Beloved. It is a love such as the Gopis bore to the child Krishna.

“The Adhikârîka Purushas, the prophets and Incarnations, that are born to uplift the world, have not to suffer the bondage of Karma Their incarnation is not due to their past actions but to the will of God that they may serve mankind Indra and other gods are lords of ‘spheres of enjoyment’ and they have their fall But the Jivanmuktas, the ‘living-free’ are all-powerful It is true the Brahma-Sutras have stipulated that they cannot create or destroy the world, these functions belonging to God But it is not that they *lack* the power to create etc, they simply do not want to create Possession of *all* powers is a *sine qua non* of the attainment of Mukti

“Sri Ramakrishna said that Siva had taken one sip from the Ocean of Brahman, Suka had touched it, and Nârada had only seen it from a distance

“Someone has written expressing his disapproval of the constant festivity that has characterized the stay of Mahârâj (Swami Brahmananda) here But how can it be otherwise? The Bhâgavata says, ‘Those who realize the eternal presence of the Lord in their heart, are endowed with perpetual good and beauty, and their life is imbued with an eternal festive joy’

“Râmânuja came to where Surdâs lived and found him daily complaining to the Lord of his sufferings and sorrows. He said ‘Why, O Surdâs, do you thus complain of your sorrow to God?’ Sing His glory.’ That is how Surdâs came to compose his hundred thousand verses in praise of the Lord Surdâs who had been blind regained his eyesight afterwards.

“It is God who does everything. Rightly does Tulsidâs say that profit and loss, life and death, fame and slander, all are His gifts. Yes, He is the only doer. But the plan of the world is not all for Mukti, but also for Bhoga enjoyment. Thus people plod on through joy and sorrow till they ‘wake up’ and are emancipated. God is the motive power behind both virtue and vice. And behind *all* these is His beneficent will. Every action thus tends to an Ultimate Good.

“The world is full of bewildering variety and is extremely complex. All phenomena are the effect of Triguna. But there is a higher state beyond them, which has been realized by Paramahamsas. Whoever sees the underlying unity amidst these varieties has peace eternal. For then there is neither loss nor profit nor good nor evil.

We have been reading these few days of the selfish prayers in the *Rudrâdhyâya* 'Do not destroy my cows Ever turn thy benignant face on me Come putting aside thy bow and arrows And humble my enemies and chastise them ' Well, such prayers come out of selfishness But when one is rid of body-consciousness, one does not feel these desires The highest conception is to think that everything is He Failing that, it is best to think that He is the real agent behind all actions and He is causing us to act

"Sri Ramakrishna used to say that one becomes fit for Sannyâsa only by having been a king in a previous birth and enjoyed life Then only is one imbued with true dispassionateness from the very beginning of life Is Sannyâsa a mere form? Our idea was that a Sannyâsin is very rare For no ordinary man is he whom Mâyâ has released from her bondage When I saw three thousand monks at Hrishikesh, then did I truly feel the difference between a true and a formal monk A mere ochre garb does not constitute Sannyâsa

"They want Sannyâsa early in order to evade work Our Master did not emphasize Sannyâsa so much as realizing God But

it is true he was emphatic that knowledge of God is not possible without renunciation "

Someone "But Swamiji strongly emphasized the necessity of Sannyâsa "

Swami "Yes, he did But he also initiated the institution of service You must take him in toto, which you do not Some there are who refuse to work They want, to use the Master's words, to have the 'butter put into their mouth, they will not churn it out themselves Everything must be given them ready-made ' That is why initiation into Sannyâsa does not conduce to progress

"Unless we dedicate ourselves to the service of others we can do little good to them Infinite sympathy and patience are needed A bad health is a great impediment, it often causes mental irritation

"Was not Swamiji Sâttvika, of a calm and dispassionate mind? Who was ever so Sâttvika as he? My impression of him is not derived from hearsay, but from constant companionship and ocular evidence I have seen him sitting at meditation at nine in the evening, quite insensible to the bitter stings of swarms of mosquitoes, and rising from it at five in the morning to take an early bath It seemed as if Siva himself was medi-

tating, so deeply absorbed and unconscious of the external he would be! Self-control and balance—these are characteristics of Sattva. Swamiji saw that India could not redeem herself unless she passed first through Rajas or activity. That is why he preached the doctrine of selfless work which is Rajas or activity inspired and controlled by Sattva or mental poise and dispassionateness.

“Sattva gives self-control, Rajas evokes activity and Tamas degrades. Tamas must be changed into Rajas or activity. Tamas is like drowsiness in snow—fatal. If one takes a fatal dose of opium, he should be forcibly kept from falling into sleep, even by physical torments, for to sleep then is to die. Indians are going down in Tamas under the pretext of Sattva. Swamiji tried hard to whip them into activity.”

Someone “Why this degradation?”

Swami “The reason is quite apparent—they have strayed away from the ideal.”

17th November

Disciple “How to control the senses?”

Swami “What do I know? (After a pause) ‘My only refuge is Thy name, O Mother Syâmâ,’ ‘Never forget the name of Sri Durgâ. Why dost thou

forget Her, O my mind ! Just utter the name of Sri Durgâ

“Can you for once stop all talk and vigorously repeat only the name of God ? Well, you see, you cannot expect to accumulate unless there is something already in the store. The man who lives from hand to mouth cannot store up anything. But if anyhow by hard labour he can once lay by something, his store goes on increasing rapidly. Similar is the case even in the field of religion. For a period work hard, and try to store up something. Always repeat the name of God—while taking meals, while at bed, or when you are at your seat. Just close your lips and be busy only with the repetition of the name of God. The Master would cite the example of the compass. The needle of a compass always points to the north. You may turn the needle away, but as soon as you let go the hold, it again points to the north. Your mind also should be so moulded. If somebody comes and diverts your mind to any other topic, as soon as he leaves you, the mind should be again repeating His name. Just see—so long I was talking with you, as soon as I have stopped speaking, the song is going on within, ‘Why dost thou, my mind, become

forgetful? Just repeat the name of Sri Durgâ'—exactly what the mind was doing before the conversation began. And you must do everything quite secretly, so that nobody comes to know of it.

"People say, 'What He wishes, will come to pass.' Well, will the wish arise in Him, without any struggle on your part? Only when the wings are tired does a bird sit on the mast of a ship for rest. Only when you have struggled your utmost will real resignation come."

Disciple "What method should I follow as regards repeating His name?"

Swami "There is nothing to be bothered about methods. Just think, 'I am Thy child, Thou art my Mother.' Talk with Her in the same way as you are talking with me. She knows your heart. She is indeed within all."

Disciple "Should one pray also?"

Swami "Yes, you should be praying too."

Disciple "My only prayer is that my mind may always remain fixed on Him—that I may never forget Him."

Swami "Surely you should have that kind of prayer. You must say 'Why should I forget Thee?' I have given up

everything only with the object of praying to Thee May Thou in compassion see that I do not forget Thee ' "

Disciple "Should I take to devotional songs also ?"

Swami "Yes, you should have devotional songs also Else spiritual practices become monotonous But then in the beginning special stress should be given on Japa You should practise one thing at a time

"Be up and doing Once the mind is brought under control, there is no more fear It is the mind which creates all troubles You may be working with hands, but the mind should always be repeating His name Mere mechanical repetition of His name, while the mind is wandering—this kind of thing will not do Both mind and lips should repeat His name Mental Japa is the best "

Disciple "If we mix with people, everything becomes upset "

Swami "Avoid company so long as the mind is not under control And when the habit has once been formed, there is no harm in mixing with people

"To pray to Him also is a form of work. You should do that with all your heart and

soul Rob Him of His peace, as it were, by your constant and incessant prayers When the child weeps only a little, the mother does not think of coming But when the child cries itself hoarse and knows no stopping, then the mother comes and takes it in her arms

“Everything is due to His will ‘Praise or dispraise, honour or dishonour—everything comes from Thee’

“Regarding my illness, R said, ‘It is all due to Karma’ At once I replied, ‘It is said in the Chandī, Thou art Karma, Thou art Dharma, Thou art non-Dharma’ Karma etc, all come from Her She alone is without beginning and without end Is there anything else without beginning? It is only to give an explanation to the people that one has to say, Karma is without beginning, etc Health or disease, good or evil—everything comes and goes according to Her will This is the final truth He only can understand this, to whom She Herself reveals this truth If you are determined not to understand, I have no power to make you convinced

“That everything happens at Her will, one must actually realize in life else a mere intellectual belief is of no avail That is our

resting place, as it were, when we receive blows from the world we get peace from this thought

“What is meant by spiritual practice? It is nothing but an attempt to identify oneself with the one ultimate Reality, which alone exists. There is only One without a second. Perception of unity is Knowledge; perception of variety is ignorance. Because we have separated ourselves from That, all troubles ensue. If one can surrender oneself wholly to Him, there is real peace. You cannot find peace in anything else. The more you go towards Him, the greater is the peace. Ultimately, you will have to rest in Him. Are you in fact separate from Him? You find yourself separate, because you think so, else you are nothing but He.

“Success or failure, everything rests with Him.

“Satan was greatly vaunting of his power. So God sent him to tempt Job. Satan went to Job and said ‘Just worship me, and I will give you greater wealth and prosperity.’ Job replied, ‘Get thee hence, Satan.’ Enraged at this, Satan destroyed his all, one by one; he lost his children and finally he himself fell a victim to leprosy. Even then Satan did not cease tempting him. At this Job

said, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord ' "

27th December

Swami " 'He is really a saint who has
tasted the bliss of Râma
What has he known, who has not
known Râma ' "

"Tulsidâs has said that four things are very essential in the world association with holy people, taking the name of God, kindness, and the spirit of service

"Association is the root cause of everything 'From association grows attachment,' says the Gîtâ There is a saying Tell me what company he keeps and I will tell you what he is Association with holy people purifies the mind But they must be really holy men The outward garb alone does not make a man holy He is really a holy man, who has made God his own If one realizes God, to him the world is a paradise and everything in it yields whatever he desires "

The Swami was reading a Bengali book, *Vaiṣṇānīk Jagat*, by Sriṣut Ramendra Sundar Trivedi Referring to the book he said :
"The author has tried to show that every-

thing is growing according to the law of the survival of the fittest. Yes, this theory holds good in the lower stages, from amoeba to man, for up to this self-interest is the principal thing. But after the human stage is reached, no longer is the theory true. Now the goal is to reach God. And the more one can forget his self, the nearer he approaches God.

“Swami Vivekananda once told me ‘From the very nature of things, it is difficult to understand anything of the world. And now after lifelong labour it seems that I have known a little and when I think of giving that knowledge to others, the call has come from Above. Come away, just come away—don’t bother yourself about teaching others. It is not the will of the Granny that the play should be over.’”

“His family members were in hard condition. Once, one of his brothers came to see him at the monastery at Baranagore. Swami abused him right and left and drove him off. At this I took the boy aside and sympathetically treated and comforted him. Then I asked Swami, ‘Why did you abuse the boy so much?’ Swami replied, ‘You think I have no feeling, that I am heartless, is it not?’ I was completely silenced. Then he

said 'You see, if I show my love for them even to a little extent, it will not be possible for me to stay here, they will all come and give me all sorts of troubles I would like to see that my brothers and sisters—all my relations are dying of hunger, while I am taking the name of God In that case only shall I know that I have real love for Him'

"Sârādâ (Swami Trigunatitananda) wanted to leave the monastery and go home Swami Brahmananda was dissuading him, saying 'Why should you go? Where will you go leaving Narendra? Have you got from anyone else the kind of love that you get from Narendra? I can also go home and live there if I like But then it is solely the love of Narendra that keeps me here' "

4th February, 1922

Dr K of Cossipore has come to Benares with the idea of becoming a Sannyâsin and is putting up in the Advaita Asrama for some days past

Swami (Addressing K) "When once God is realized, all religious practices seem like children's play with dolls In the play children say, 'This is my bride, this is my husband' They give one doll in marriage to another This playing with dolls is but

the forecast of the actual play they will have in life. And when they get real husbands, all their joys are with them, the dolls are all put aside, who then cares for them? Similarly, when God is realized, all religious practices are left behind. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'The bridegroom is expected, so a bride dresses herself nicely, combs her hair, does many things to look beautiful with the expectation of getting a husband. But when she gets one, everything is neglected—where is the necessity for all these things then?' "

10th March

Doctor B was telling a visitor (pointing to the Swami and us), "They are all Sâdhus."

Swami (With a smile) "Yes, Sâdhus in form, no doubt. But, then, Sâdhuhood does not consist in clothes and dresses. The mind must attain Sâdhuhood. And that is a very difficult task. 'Set fire to desires and burn them to ashes, that will make a nice washing material (for the mind)'. "

"The name of God removes the dirt of the mind. As impurities in water settle down at the bottom, when Nirmali (a kind of fruit) is put into it, in the same way, all impurities in the mind pass away on one's

constantly repeating the name of God 'A very serious disease it is, O Mother Divine, I know not whether I shall live or die I have got a distaste for Thy name, day and night' To have a distaste for God's name is the greatest mishap

"(Addressing D^r B) To develop a dislike for food is a kind of disease, is it not the opinion of the medical science?"

D^r B "There never comes a distaste for sense-enjoyments "

Swami "That is true, indeed You eat your fill—loading your stomach to its utmost capacity It satisfies your hunger for the time being, but soon the same hankering for food comes again Only a temporary cessation it is—not a permanent one Of all enjoyments, the one possessing the greatest attraction is that of sex All enjoyments are called Bhoga, but sex-enjoyment is called Sambhoga enjoyment *par excellence* But even that is controlled if one knows how to discriminate

"The other day a doctor came—a very nice man He said, 'The mind gets averse to all enjoyments, but not to that (meaning sex)' I said, 'Pray to God' He replied, 'There is no desire to pray even' He seemed to be a very nice man Unhesitat-

ingly he laid bare all that was in his mind before a Sâdhu. I said, 'All right, enjoy the sourness of the hog-plum. In time it will go.' Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'Hog-plum is all peel and stone, it has no pulp and causes colic when taken. But then it has got an attractive taste. So is this world. Where is happiness in the world?—it is full of sufferings, an abode of misery. Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, 'Those who take refuge in Me alone, cross over this Mâva. Anticipating Arjuna's question, 'If by taking refuge in You, one can escape from the clutches of Mâyâ, why do not people do that?' Sri Krishna said, 'Where is the chance of that? I have, on the other hand got My Mâyâ, which does not allow people to take refuge in Me.' Tulsidâs used to say, 'When there is fever in the body, one will have a dislike even for palatable food.' In the same way, so long as one is in sin, one mind will not move towards God.

"The mind must be made pure. A impure mind is one which has got a great attachment to sense-enjoyments, whereas the one which has got a great measure of dispassionateness is pure."

12th April

Swami "Man's mind generally works in the three lowest planes it travels up and down amongst those three only Food, sleep and sexual pleasure it does not generally like to rise above these planes The mind of some rises up to the plane of the heart Then one gets the vision of light The next is the 'throat plane' If the mind goes there, the world seems to be unreal Even from these two planes the mind comes down, such is the force of the downward pull But when the mind rises from the throat to the 'plane of the eyebrow,' it does not come down again below the heart The mind next goes to the 'plane of the brain' "

Swami J "They say one gets the vision of light, when the mind rises to the 'throat-plane' What kind of light is that?—Is it very luminous?"

Swami "Yes, one sees light But, then, it is not any gross light—it is the light of knowledge

" 'The sun does not shine there, nor the moon nor the stars nor these lightnings, not to speak of this fire He shining, all shines after Him By His light all this shines' Here, to think that Brahman is a big light which bedims the light of the sun

and the moon, will be a mistake. The passage means that He existing, the whole universe is manifested.

“Man is entirely absorbed in sense-enjoyments. Eating, sleeping, and sexual pleasure—in these he spends his whole life. Sri Ramakrishna used to say ‘Big rice-merchants put parched rice etc. at the very door, lest the rats enter the store-rooms. As soon as the rats come, they set themselves to eating those things, inside there are the bags of rice, of them the rats get no scent. In the same way, the Divine Mother has kept men deluded with tempting things, gold and lust. Men cannot go beyond them and get at the rice-bags, i.e. God. This world is like a labyrinth. Once one enters it one finds no way out. With human birth there comes an opportunity to get out. But of what avail is it? Man forgets all, busy with things pertaining to the senses.’”

30th April

Swami J. “Many give up spiritual practices at last out of sheer weariness.”

Swami “Why, none gets weary of sense-enjoyment! In that everybody is full of energy—people are even ready to borrow energy from others and get sense-enjoyment.

Yayâti borrowed youth from his son and enjoyed the world for a thousand years. The talk of getting tired comes only with regard to spiritual practices! That is all nonsense. They have no liking, they get no taste—hence they feel tired. After going through spiritual practices for some time, they think, ‘No result is found here, we had been better off in our worldly life.’

“Rather than besmearing the body with mud and then undergoing the trouble of washing that, is it not better to keep at a safe distance from mud? But how many can do that? So Sri Ramakrishna would say that it is better to have a little of worldly enjoyment. But then it must be accompanied with due discrimination. Through this cycle of birth and death one is gradually moving towards Him.”

4th May

Swami “What a great power is imbedded in words! Though we may be repeating that all is unreal, that this world is false, yet suppose I tell you a harsh word it disturbs your mind. When there is so much power in evil words, why should there not be power in the Vedic dicta (I am Brahman etc.)? But as we have no faith in the Vedic

dicta or Mantras, they do not become effective in our life Words, again, are of two kinds—spoken and written Something is written in a letter On reading that, you will have a reaction, good or bad, in your mind And again—how funny!—there will not be the same effect upon each and all Some will be affected, some not Those who are concerned with the particular thing—they only will be affected While we discriminate, it seems that there is nothing, but a moment after, everything comes If there is no object of sense-enjoyment in front of you when you discriminate, you may feel that you have no weakness But as soon as the object of temptation comes, you are upset We discriminate, no doubt, but after doing that for some time, we give up the habit And the result is this One must be established in discrimination One must dwell in that Without that no result will come He is indeed wise, whose mind does not react though the objects of enjoyment come before him This is the test When your mind has attained to that stage, then only you can be sure that it is all right

“Duality is nothing It has come only from here (pointing to his heart) It vanishes, if one will only shake it off with

a will. If one does not want sense-enjoyment, if one hates the approach of any thought of it in the mind, of their own accord will all desires for sense-objects fly away. Suppose I do not like the company of a particular individual, do not talk with him, thus showing my constant dislike for him, then in a few days he of his own accord will stop coming to me. One succeeds in driving away the desires for sense-enjoyments, if only one makes an effort for that. It is because we cling to sense-objects that desire for them does not leave us.

“There was a king and he had a friend—a holy man. The king would very often say to his friend, ‘Just release me from this worldly bondage, just make me free.’ The holy man would give him instructions. But yet the king was persistent in his request, ‘Just make me free.’ One day the holy man firmly caught hold of a pillar and repeatedly began to request the king, ‘Friend, just disentangle me.’ The king said, ‘Why don’t you let go the hold?’ The holy man replied, ‘No, you must disentangle me.’ The king replied, ‘A great fun indeed, you yourself have clasped the pillar tightly and at will you can leave it off, but no, you will request me to come to your rescue. Why don’t you

yourself give it up?" Then the holy man left the pillar and said to the king, "It is the same case with you. You yourself are clasping the world and yet you constantly request me to release you from it. Why don't you yourself give it up?" The king understood.

"M's eldest son died, M's wife came to Sri Ramakrishna and began to weep bitterly. I was then near by. He sternly said to M's wife, seeing her weep so much, 'At other times you talk of knowledge, devotion, etc., where are these things now gone? Have they vanished now?' His words greatly appealed to me.

"Often if you thus speak sternly to a person in grief or sorrow, it becomes very effective—the influence of Tamas goes off at once. At the time of happiness everybody can remain calm, can discriminate, but one is established in it only if one can remain so even in adversity. At that time man has to summon up great strength. If he yields to weakness then, grief will overwhelm him—will altogether ruin him."

9th May

Suami "It is very hard indeed to control the mind. But that must be done anyhow, there is no other way.

"One should have great determination. We must control the mind and not allow the mind to control us. Here is my towel. With this I shall rub the body at my pleasure, similarly we ought to be able to use the mind according to our will. We should ride the horse and not allow the horse to ride us. Let there be no reversal of the right process. The horse before the cart and not the cart before the horse. Swami Vivekananda would say, 'The mind must be made like a lump of earth, wherever I shall throw it, it must stick.'"

13th May

Swami "There is something in this body, which is ever free and untainted by sin—sin cannot even touch That. If you can give up the idea that you are a Jiva and be one with That, then there is no longer any fear. Lust and anger are the characteristics of Jivahood—by gradually freeing itself from this lust and gold, the Jiva at last becomes one with God. From constant thinking of evil things, of lust and gold, man's body also becomes changed—the facial expression gets changed. After committing a sin, however much you may try to hide it, all will be in vain, your very face will

betray you. Even an ordinary man will be able to find you out, not to speak of those who know thought-reading. It is the eyes which give the clearest indication. The appearance of those who commit dacoity or murder is altogether of a different kind. Have you not marked that? A man with a very beautiful appearance becomes very ugly-looking by committing heinous deeds, whereas a great sinner who, perhaps through the grace of some holy man, turns over a new leaf, begins to look beautiful. I have seen these things with my own eyes.

“Conquer lust. Assert your independence. Conquer lust even before it can conquer you. Once the lust gets control over you, you are done for. It is just like what happens in wrestling feats. In wrestling, if once you fall below, you are done for. Through discrimination and devotion to God one can be free from lust. With the gradual increase of love for God, lust, anger, etc. wane out. While going to visit Sri Ramakrishna, as soon as I would enter the gate of the Dakshineswar Temple-garden I would feel a palpitating sensation in the heart. Many would feel like that—because the thought of going near a very holy presence would create in us a sense of awe. When one goes to

a holy presence, one's sins within begin to tremble."

Disciple "What about those who had no sin in their mind? Did their heart tremble too?"

Swami "Yes, it did. For who was there so pure as Sri Ramakrishna? Even the purest among us was insignificant in comparison with Sri Ramakrishna. When any contrary thought would cross my mind, he would at once detect that and say, 'Why do you look so?' Perhaps this is the reason.' And what was my wonder, he would say exactly the real thing. How fearless is he, whose conscience can say that he has done no wrong!"

5th June

Swami "If anyone would lose anything, Sri Ramakrishna would be very much annoyed. Once Hazra lost a towel in the Ganges. At this Sri Ramakrishna was much displeased and he said to him, 'I am often beyond the normal plane of consciousness, still I have never lost anything. And you are so forgetful!'

"What is wanted is dependence on God. One must surrender everything to Him. It is absolutely necessary that one

should completely surrender oneself to Him. Without that no success is possible, know it for certain, no success is possible. Having fully surrendered yourself to Him, live contentedly in whatever condition He places you. The path of self-surrender is open to all, but none sees it, none follows it.

“People always seek advantages. They are always after physical comfort—their one thought is how to live well or eat well. Does anybody really want God? One must be ready to lay down one’s very life for Him. You must give your whole mind and body to Him—even more than that, if possible. Whenever He gives you any work to do, do that with all your heart and soul, concentrating all your powers on that. That done, He will perhaps give you another task to do. Finish that also to the best of your ability. Be thus ready to devote your whole life to His work. In that case only, may He grant you release after a few trials.”

“If you want to be a Sannyâsin, you must give up altogether the habit of planning for yourself. You must depend on Him fully, you must completely surrender yourself to Him. It will not do to keep anything at your own disposal. Body, mind, heart, soul—everything should be given away to Him—

to be done with, as He likes. If the body needs looking after, He will do it.

“While I was at Lugal (a place near Hardwar), I fell seriously ill. G. wanted to send information to the Math at Belur. At this I warned him, ‘Take care. If I learn that you have written any letter, then even in this state of health I will leave this place.’ There it was that I said, ‘The Ganges water is the medicine and the Lord Himself is the physician.’ It was not mere pretension. I really felt so.”

Disciple “Diverse thoughts distract the mind—how to drive them away?”

Swami “The more you think of Him, the more will other thoughts pass away. The Master used to say, ‘The more you go towards the East, the further will the West recede from you.’ As the waters of the Ganges flow in one continuous current towards the ocean, so should your thoughts run towards Him. If you can continue thus for some time, everything will be all right—the mind will automatically flow to Him.

“Write on your mind in bold characters, ‘No Admission.’ Then afterwards there will come a time, when you will be in a position to say, ‘Come one, come all.’ It is because I keep the doors open that people come to

me If I close them, how can they come? Why should you allow other thoughts to come and disturb your mind? It is only because you allow them to come that they come In the beginning, you will not be able to perform meditation and Japa always—other things are necessary, a little meditation, a little Japa, some reading from the scriptures, singing devotional songs for some time—various methods to remember Him alone After practising this way for some time, you will be able to think of Him and concentrate your mind on one point

“Mere theoretical knowledge will not do We know everything, but do nothing Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) used to say, ‘We know so much that it would have been better to know a little less’ Do something, just do something Nobody likes to take the trouble of doing anything You have to work hard yourself It is not possible for another man to work for you by proxy

“You can be relieved of a load on the head by another person, but if you feel hungry, you yourself will have to eat—your hunger will not be appeased if somebody else takes food for you

“The Master used to sing, ‘Mind, struggle unto death Can any pearl be found in knee-

deep waters? If you want to realize Him, dive down into the very depths of the ocean ’

“At one time, we practised hard Even now there is such a Samskâra that at will we can get absorbed in spiritual practices ”

SPIRITUAL TALKS
BY SWAMI SHIVANANDA



Swami Shivananda

SPIRITUAL TALKS

By Swami Shivananda

23rd March, 1919

Some college students had come to see the Belur Monastery. The Swami was sitting in the eastern verandah of the main building overlooking the Ganges. The students had just finished their University examinations and were preparing to go home for the vacation.

Swami "You have a long vacation before you. How are you going to spend it? What is the use of spending it in merry-making and playing at cards? Having come to this place take a few of our ideas and try to work them out. Raise a small fund amongst yourselves, buy a few homeopathic medicines, and when you go home serve the sick and the poor of the locality by giving them medicine free and by nursing them. Freely mix with the depressed classes and inquire about their welfare and their wants. If you do this and in addition nurse them when they are ill and give them medicines, then they will feel very much obliged. Run a night school also for them. Give them oral instruction in History,

Sanitation, Hygiene, and tell them about Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. In this way give them education. They have to be raised if the country is to rise. At first, probably, they will be suspicious about your ways and means. But in time, when they will find that you have no selfish motive, they will be won over. You also try to be selfless. It is only by doing selfless work in this way that the mind gets purified. And when the mind is purified, even the slightest suggestion would fill your heart with devotion for the Lord. If the mind be not purified, you may practise Japa to any extent, nothing will result by way of spiritual progress. What can Japa do if the mind is full of selfishness, jealousy, hatred, etc.? It is because the country is engrossed in Tamas that Swami has prescribed work as a means to raise it up. If you cannot give up your selfishness for the good of the many, of what use is it merely getting degrees? What is the use of taking up jobs? You are the descendants of the ancient Rishis, the pure Hindu blood is in your veins. Are you not ashamed of this slavery? You talk of patriotism. What else can be greater patriotism than this love for the poor and being of service to them?

“If you really want to love your country do as I have said Arise, awake, shake off all lethargy, be firmly established in truth and spread education, sanitation, etc among the masses—in every village, sub-division and district Your spirit of renunciation and of service will inspire others and the country will be soon raised Spend every vacation in this way then something permanent may come out of it Of course, along with it you will have play and recreation also But merely idling away the whole of the vacation and singing patriotic songs will not help the country materially ”

6th May, 1922

It was evening The Swami was sitting in the upper verandah of the main building of the Belur Monastery A disciple asked him

“I want to ask you a question Can a Westerner enter the shrine of the Master ?”

Swami “Why not ? But of course, he must take off his shoes before he enters ”

Disciple “Suppose a Mohammedan also wants to go into the shrine ?”

Swami “Yes, he also can go Only the other day Moulana Mohammed Ali and

Moulana Shaukat Ali came here They went into the shrine ”

Disciple “Yes, Mahârâj, I also think that unless people of all creeds are allowed to visit the shrine of the Master, how can we maintain the all-comprehensive ideal of the Master, and how can people regard him as the teacher of all religions? Of course, one must be clean if one wants to go into the shrine

“An Englishman one day visited the Dacca Centre of our Mission When he was told of the Master’s teachings on the harmony of religions, he asked ‘Can I enter into your shrine-’ ‘Certainly you can,’ I replied ‘but you have to take off your shoes ’ ”

21st May

It was Sunday, about 8-30 at night At the Belur Math, the Swami was sitting in the outer verandah of the main building, overlooking the sacred Ganges Some monks were sitting or standing near him One of them asked him in course of conversation

“Is it true that the amulet of the Master, which is worshipped here, was given to him by your father ?”

Swami “While the Master was suffering from an excruciating burning sensation all

over his body, my father asked him to wear an Ishta-kavacha¹ on his person. It is that same Ishta-kavacha.”

A Devotee “Were you at that time at Dakshineswar?”

Swami “I was not even born then. It happened during the days of the Master’s Sâdhanâ. My father used in those days to visit Dakshineswar now and then. He used to practise as a pleader at Barasat. In fact he was connected with many landlords including Rani Rasmani as a legal practitioner, and used to earn a good deal of money. He was a great Tântrika Sâdhaka. I remember how he used to invite many Tântrika Sâdhakas from Kamakhya, paying all their expenses, and worship the Divine Mother and practise Japa. I remember one Sâdhaka who used to sit at Japa with a bottle of wine. He would drink a little from time to time and continue Japa throughout the night.

“I, however, did not know that my father visited Dakshineswar. I learnt it afterwards from the Master. The Master generally never

¹ An amulet containing an inscription of the mystic formula pertaining to his Chosen Deity or Ishta-devatâ.

asked anyone about his home affairs. One day, however, he asked me, 'I don't know why, but I feel a desire to ask you about your people. Where is your home?' I mentioned my village. 'Who is your father?' 'Kanaï Ghosal,' I replied. On hearing this he exclaimed, 'Oh! he was a great Sâdhaka. He used to practise Japa in the Kâlî temple here, wearing a red silk cloth. He used to bring a man with him, who would sit behind him singing Mother's songs, and tears would trickle down your father's face. And as he would come out of the temple, with his eyes all red, he would seem to me like a veritable Bhairava. At that time I had a terrible burning sensation all over my body. It was so intense that all the hair on my body was burnt. I said to your father, 'You know many things. Can you tell me how I can get rid of this burning sensation?' He advised me to put on the Ista-kavacha, and that relieved me.' "

A Monk "Who made the Kavacha for the Master?"

Swami "That I do not know. This is all that the Master told me."

A Monk "Where did you first see the Master? At Dakshineswar?"

Swami "No, at the house of Rama Babu¹ A relation of Rama Babu used to work in the same office with me He would visit the Master and often tell us about him at the office I used to practise Sâdhanâ even as a boy I was attached to Brâhmoism in those days, and I read about the Master in Keshab Babu's paper, *Dharma-tattva* I did not, however, know the exact location of Dakshineswar or the way to it I was afterwards told by Rama Babu's relation that it was opposite Bally Khâl

"One Saturday that gentleman informed me that the Master would visit Rama Babu's house that day, and that I could see him if I went there I said 'The place is very near to where I stay I shall surely go'

"For a long time I had been eager to know the nature of Samâdhi I wanted very much to know what it exactly was I questioned many people, but none could explain it to me Only one man said 'None can realize Samâdhi in this age I have seen only one man who has it—he is Ramakrishna Paramahansa of Dakshineswar'

"Anyhow, I went that evening to Rama Babu's house I found the Master sitting in

¹ Ram Chandra Datta a prominent lay disciple of the Master

a room crowded with people. The Master was scarcely conscious. I saluted and sat near him. You can well imagine my surprise when I heard him talking eloquently on a subject which I had been so eager to know about—*Samâdhi* !”

A Monk “What did he say about *Samâdhi* that day?”

Swami “I do not remember it in detail. But I remember that he dwelt on *Nirvikalpa Samâdhi* and said that very few can attain it and that if one attained it, one’s body dropped off in twenty-one days.

“I did not have any talk with the Master on that occasion. A month after, I went to *Dakshineswar* and became known to him.”

7th July, 1928

The *Swami* has been ill for some time. One of the devotees asked him, “How are you, sir, this morning?”

Swami “Not quite fit. But then, nothing better can be expected. This body has become old. I am pulling on somehow through His grace. And should we, after all, be anxious about the body? I am not anxious about it at all. If it just serves my spiritual practices, that is sufficient. The *Sâdhu* who is anxious about his health or is

afraid of death, is no Sâdhu at all. He is only preparing himself to be one, he has not yet become a Sâdhu. I shall be satisfied if it goes on in this way. Let Him keep this body as long as He likes, if He thinks of getting anything done through it. As for myself, I am always ready for His call."

13th January, 1930

A devotee first paid his respects to the Swami and then went to the Shrine. At this the Swami said: "That is not proper. First one should go to the Shrine and worship the Lord and then come here. 'With His light all this shines', 'He shining, everything else shines.' These trees, plants, flowers, devotees, myself, and everything belong to Him. Their existence depends on His existence. Apart from Him nothing exists. He is Existence Absolute. In Him exists this manifoldness particularized by names and forms as various objects—as Hari, Ram, the sun, the moon, etc. Because He exists, these depending on Him exist. He is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. If Existence has no Knowledge it is no Existence at all. What is Existence is Knowledge. Again, where there are Existence and Knowledge, there is Bliss also. For what is misery? It

is the absence of real Knowledge So where there is Knowledge there is no misery but Bliss ”

14th January

Swami “If one practises meditation and Japa regularly along with work then there will be no trouble We have to work, that is certain But then if one does not practise meditation, Japa, etc along with work, then one will not be able to work in the right spirit The whole trouble is with ‘me’ and ‘mine’, which always seeks comfort Meditation and Japa are absolutely necessary—there should be no lapse in them Then only can one hope to progress When you meditate, think that you and He alone exist, and forget everything else—work, Order, Math, etc Gradually you have to forget even your own existence If work makes the mind impure, it is no good work but an evil one

“The right kind of service is possible only when one sees God in the person served But it is difficult to have this knowledge at the outset So to start with one has to depend on the words of one’s Guru and take it on faith We must have faith in Swamiji, who has propounded this doctrine of service

The Master's life is the aphorism, as it were, and Swami's is the commentary on it. Swami formulated this doctrine of service seeing God in everything, from several incidents in the Master's life. The Master had on more than one occasion made Mathur Babu serve the poor.

"Mahârâj (Swami Brahmananda) used to say that if one devotes a small part of one's mind to work and gives the rest to God, even then one can turn out enough work. You must be constantly thinking of Him. Tulsidâs says 'Let the hands work but let the lips utter His name'."

26th January

Disciple "How to avoid low thoughts?"

Swami "Low thoughts will come and go. Don't mind them. Through His grace, as a result of constant practice you will get strength. Devote your whole mind to Japa, meditation, worship, and study of the scriptures, whichever appeals to you for the time being. The Lord will set everything right. Sri Ramakrishna never liked one-sidedness. He was always for many-sidedness."

Disciple "Does an Incarnation continue to live in the subtle body for the good of the devotees even after the gross body dies?"

Swami "Certainly He continues to live in that way till the end of the cycle. How long does the gross last, after all? The subtle existence is absolutely necessary."

Disciple "How to meditate?"

Swami "One has to meditate on the different centres in the Sushumnâ (the nerve current flowing through the spinal column). In the heart one has to meditate on one's chosen Deity as sitting on a red lotus with twelve petals, and in the head on the Guru as seated on a white lotus with thousand petals. These meditations help Japa and therefore should be practised."

8th February

Hearing that a few were practising hard austerities the Swami said "You cannot realize God through Tapasyâ, sacrifice, charity or study of the scriptures. He alone realizes Him on whom descends His grace. But then you have on the other hand, 'This Atman cannot be realized by the weak.' One who is weak and effortless cannot realize Him. The Gîtâ lays stress on personal effort (Purushakâra). 'The self must be raised by the self, so let not one weaken this self. For this self is the friend of oneself, and this self is the enemy of

oneself ' One has to liberate oneself from bondage, one should never be despondent Here 'self' means mind, intellect, etc

21st February

Disciple "Does dispassionateness (Vairâgya) depend on spiritual practices?"

Suami "No It depends upon past impressions (Samskâras) One gets it only when one is free from all desires and not otherwise If any desire is left in the mind this spirit of renunciation cannot come It comes through enjoyment tempered with discrimination And of course, there is need for spiritual practice too But the one thing necessary is His grace That is why the Master used to pray 'O Mother, I do not know any spiritual practice Please be gracious unto me ' Without the Lord's grace no spiritual practice is possible No one works independently Everyone works as directed by Him He is the mechanic and the rest are mere machines But it is very hard to remember all this If one has this idea then one gets beyond all good and evil If the Mother is gracious, then everything is possible—dispassionateness, spiritual practice, etc The Lord has two powers, Vidyâ

Sakti (knowledge) and Avidyâ Sakti (ignorance) If He removes from us the influence of the latter and helps with the former, then everything goes on well So pray, 'Mother, be gracious unto me ' If Her grace is there nothing is impossible "

22nd March

Seeing one despondent in his spiritual practices the Swami said "That is not good Don't yield to despondency It makes the mind restless Always think that you are all blessed, that you are the children of the Lord If evil thoughts come to your mind don't pay any heed to them There are impressions of past lives in the mind and now and then they come to the conscious plane Have strength There is no fear, you will get everything in time Mere mechanical Japa does not help much You must have love for the Lord But then even mechanical Japa has some results, for after all it is the Lord's name that is being repeated But the main thing is love for the Lord with the idea that He is our father, mother, friend, master, everything You must have some such relationship While practising Japa you must sit at ease and be calm "

2nd April

A devotee who had been abroad for long, came to see the Swami. Seeing the Swami's broken health he burst into tears.

Swami "When the Buddha was about to attain Parinirvâna, Ananda was overwhelmed with grief. At this the Buddha said 'Why are you crying, Ananda?' This life lasts for fifty or sixty years or at best a hundred years. But I am going to attain eternal life after this'."

The topic drifted on to the vexed question of caste and the Swami replied "Let caste remain as a social institution. What is that to us? The Master used to say that there is no caste among devotees. They all formed a separate caste. We are Sannyâsins and so have nothing to do with caste."

Disciple "What is the relation between Guru and the Ishta? Are they one?"

Swami "Guru and Ishta (chosen Ideal or Deity) are one. But then so long as you are in the relative world, bounded by name and form, you have to accept them as separate. When Knowledge comes, you will find that the two are one. This Knowledge one gets after hard austerities."

14th July

Disciple "How is it that sometimes evil thoughts come to the mind?"

Suamī "That is quite natural. Pray to the Lord for strength, Knowledge, and dispassionateness. Pray to Him with all your heart for His grace, and for devotion and faith. It is not possible for everyone to practise hard austerities, but then, through prayer everything is attained. Now and then a desire for enjoyment may be felt. Never mind, it is nothing, discriminate and renounce such desires.

"Desire begets misery, to be without desires is bliss. Desire for enjoyment no doubt has to be given up. But then all desires are not to be given up. It is only material desires that are to be given up. But the desire to realize God, the desire for Knowledge and devotion are not to be given up."

Disciple "Why is it so hard to meditate?"

Suamī "You must have introspection. You must study your own mind, otherwise how can you remove all impurities from it? If you find it difficult to meditate, be prayerful. It is not possible at the beginning to

have a clear image of the chosen Deity (Ishta) during meditation "

8th August

Swami "In this struggle for life there will always be hope and fear Life without struggles is no life at all If man has a continuous flow of happiness and sense-enjoyment, then he will never think of higher things,—about God, soul, etc And how does such a life differ from that of the brutes? But if there are only fear and misery, they dwarf his growth—they do not allow him to progress "

13th August

Swami "If you meditate on God with form, He Himself will reveal to you His real nature There is something beyond form This (what we see) is gross Beyond this is the subtle, and then comes the causal, and so on It is very difficult to meditate on the formless The Vedas prescribe Âkâsa (ether or space) as a symbol of the formless God Other symbols like the ocean etc may also be taken, but Âkâsa is better 'He is minuter than the minutest and greater than the greatest' He resides in the heart of man as consciousness But then one has to start

with some form. There is no question of inferiority or superiority in this—it is a question of temperament. Whatever appeals to one is the best for him. Form melts into the formless and again the formless takes a form. God is both with form and without form, and again beyond both. It is not possible to know Him with this mind. He can be comprehended only by the pure mind. The Master used to say, 'The pure mind and the Self are one.' That mind in which there are no mentations or desires, cannot be called mind. Then there exists only an all-pervading consciousness, power, or Brahman—whatever you may call it. That again takes form according to the temperament of the devotee. All this is hard to comprehend. If one be not constantly engaged in selfless work, study of scriptures, worship, Japa, and meditation, it is not possible to comprehend the truth of Vedânta. If there is His grace, these things come of themselves and one feels inclined to practise all these things. Without His grace one becomes averse to His name, finds no taste for it, and all talk about God becomes unbearable. The Lord's grace is already on him in whose mind thoughts about God arise spontaneously. There is nothing like higher or lower as

between God without form and with form
Everything is He It is the same Ganges
that you have at Kalighat, Dakshineswar,
Benares, Allahabad and Hardwar "

SPIRITUAL TALKS
BY SWAMI SRIDHANANDA



Swami Saradananda

SPIRITUAL TALKS

By *Suami Saradananda*

I

Disciple “— instructs his disciples not to practise *Japa* without taking bath etc Are such observances compulsory ?

Suami “The Master came to make religion easy People were being crushed under the weight of rules and regulations To repeat the Lord’s name and to worship Him no special time and place are necessary In whatever condition one may be, one can take His name The Master never used to give too much importance to these external observances As to means, adopt whichever suits you best If you like God with form, that will also lead you to the goal. If you like God without form, well and good; stick to it and you will progress If you doubt His very existence, then better put the question to Him thus “I do not know whether Thou existeth or not, whether Thou art formless or with form Do Thou make known to me Thy real nature ” As to changing of clothes, taking bath, and other external observances, if you can observe them, well and good, if not, go on calling

on Him without paying much attention to all these. The Master once sang a song to me and told me, 'Assimilate any one of these ideas and you will reach the goal.' The song runs as follows

'O Lord Thou art my everything, the sole support of my life, the quintessence of reality. There is none else besides Thee in this world whom I can call as my own

'Thou art happiness, peace, help, wealth, knowledge, intellect, and strength, Thou art the dwelling house and the pleasure garden, Thou art the friend and relative

'Thou art this present life, the sole refuge, Thou art the life hereafter and the heaven, Thou art the injunction of the scriptures, the Guru full of blessings and the store of infinite bliss

'Thou art the way and the goal, Thou art the creator and preserver and the worshipped, Thou art the father that punishest Thy child, the loving mother and the store-house of infinite bliss art Thou ' "

Disciple "What do you think about astrological calculations as to auspicious and inauspicious moments?"

Swami "Sri Ramakrishna used to observe these things. He believed in auspicious and inauspicious times. And because he used to

observe these things we too observe them But then, these calculations, nowadays, are not absolutely correct There have been many changes in the position of the constellations and planets, but these calculations have not been corrected accordingly So I do not observe them so much in these days ”

Disciple “The Master used to say that Srâddha food is harmful to Bhakti Why is it so ?”

Sriam “The object of food is to build a strong body and a fine intellect Unless the body and the mind are pure it is not possible to go through spiritual practices It is the food offered to God that builds a pure body and mind The Srâddha food is offered to the manes and not to God and as a result instead of building a pure mind and body it affects people otherwise Food builds the body and the mind and the nature of the food also affects them In Chaitanya’s life we have a case where an ordinary man who happened to touch him in a state of ecstasy was also overpowered by religious emotions He was prescribed to take Srâddha food to get over these emotions and as a matter of fact this food did put an end to that person’s ecstatic moods ”

Disciple "Why is the time of an eclipse considered auspicious for the practice of Japa?"

Suamī "Man becomes thoughtful when such a natural phenomenon takes place. Eclipse brings about a great change in the sphere of nature. At such a juncture when nature passes from one condition to another, the mind becomes calm and so the time is favourable for the practice of Japa and meditation."

Disciple "Have any realized God through mere work?"

Suamī "Through selfless work the mind gets purified. And when the mind becomes pure, there arise Knowledge and devotion in it. Knowledge is the very nature of the Self but being covered with ignorance it is not manifest. The object of selfless work is to remove this covering. As a matter of fact Knowledge dawns as soon as the mind becomes pure. In the Mahābhārata you have the story of the chaste lady who attained Knowledge through service to her husband and through other household duties. In the Gītā also you find, 'By work alone Janaka and others attained perfection.' Not one but many attained perfection through work, for the text adds 'and others'."

Disciple "Does work here mean Japa, meditation, etc?"

Swami "No That meaning is given by the commentators If it were so then Sri Krishna would have asked Arjuna to ring bells and wave lights before an image of God Instead, he made him fight "

Disciple "Did Arjuna fight without any sense of ego, as an instrument in the hands of the Lord?"

Swami "Certainly If the ego persists even after the vision of the Universal Form, then of what use is the vision? Arjuna says, 'My delusion is destroyed and I have regained memory through Thy grace' "

Disciple "What is the meaning of the word 'memory' in that verse?"

Swami "Arjuna had forgotten the teachings of the scriptures and of the Guru. All those principles, adhering to which Arjuna was progressing he had forgotten, overcome by delusion Fear, love of relatives, and respect for his elders had created this delusion The Advaitists interpret 'memory' as 'the regaining of the consciousness of his real nature' They too have given a very fine interpretation

"When the Vaishnavas progress in their spiritual practice and reach the Advaita

consciousness, they avoid it and try to keep permanently a relationship with the Lord. They consider that to become one with Him is an obstacle in their way and so the moment they get a scent of this consciousness they become alert to ward it off. In fact to *Sânta-bhâva*, or the peaceful devotion which is the culmination of *Advaita Sâdhanâ*, they give the lowest place. They develop the emotional side and direct it towards the Lord—this they think to be the highest goal. From the highest pitch of emotion we have the *Madhura-bhâva* or the sweet conjugal relationship with the Lord.”

Disciple “What is the meaning of the verse, *Relinquishing all Dharmas take refuge in Me alone*’ etc.”

Swami “Here Dharma means ritualistic works, Japa, etc. Tilak interprets it as the Dharma spoken of in the *Mahâbhârata*, viz. service to parents, guests, etc. But this is not correct, for even through such service some attained Knowledge. His interpretation of the *Gîtâ* is one-sided, for he wants to show that the object of the whole *Gîtâ* is to establish the superiority of the path of work. The *Gîtâ* praises highly self-effort (*Purushakârâ*). In this verse the Lord hints that this self-effort has a limit.”

Disciple "Which is the best season for spiritual practices?"

Swami "The rainy season is not suited to them. One gets drowsy when one tries to meditate. We experienced this. In that season the mind becomes more restless. Winter is best suited for meditation. Those who want to meditate must take healthy and substantial food. Ghee, butter, etc. are good."

Disciple "Why is the Kundalini imagined to be like a snake?"

Swami "I am not sure of the exact reason, probably because of the impressions of myriads of lives heaped up in coils or of the upward motion of the awakened Kundalini which is in a zig-zag way like that of a serpent. Describing the Kundalini the Master once said, while in ecstasy, 'Have you seen the serpent?'"

Disciple "What is the nature of the meditation on the formless?"

Swami "The meditation of the Lord in the Sahasrâra, which you do at the time of Bhuta Suddhi in ceremonial worship, is meditation on the formless. When you do not like any form meditate on the formless. If the meditation on the form of the Guru is more appealing at any time then better

meditate on the Guru, for the Lord manifests through the Guru ”

Disciple “Is mechanical repetition of the Mantra of any use?”

Suamī “The Tantras say that through the repetition of the Mantra, realization is attained I should think so ”

Disciple “I am trying to follow all your instructions, but somehow I find that I am not quite at home in my spiritual practices Sometimes they are mechanical without any life in them ”

Suamī “If you follow the same routine every day it is but natural that you should feel so sometimes But then on those days when you like any particular portion of the Sâdhanâ, devote yourself to that and let the other parts go In this way probably you may be neglecting particular practices for three or four days at a stretch But that does not matter When you renew these practices you will find delight in them

“Before you meditate think of the Master If you do that you will see that whatever you do will yield good results Sometimes think that he is in everything and everywhere That you are, as it were, immersed in him even as a pot is immersed in the ocean Think thus ‘That Supreme State

of the all-pervading Deity the sages realize for all time like the sky extending as far as sight can go ' He knows everything about you You cannot hide anything from him He knows even your inmost thoughts

"Of course one is much benefited by regular practice If one practises regularly for some time every day, one gains strength and finds pleasure in spiritual practices "

Disciple "I have read much about the Master Through books I have been able to know much about his life Yet when I think of his life I do not find pleasure in it Why is it so?"

Swami "To find pleasure in anything both the brain and the heart must unite Through mere intellectualism one does not get pleasure Everything becomes lifeless If what you have read about the Master appeals also to your heart then alone you will get delight by thinking on his life He would then seem to be living "

Disciple "Is it due to want of imagination then?"

Swami "All your doubts will get themselves solved in time "

Disciple "Formerly I was eager to give up service and devote myself wholly to spiritual practices Now I do not feel such

hankering There is no desire for change of environment But then I find that the mind is more and more attracted towards Japa and meditation and the reading of the scriptures How is it that I do not have nowadays that former longing for solitude ?”

Swami “What of that ? The scriptures say that if one can attain Knowledge through spiritual practices even when he is engaged in work then one need not give up work Have you not heard of Dharma-Vyâdha ? Even the work of a butcher he did not think to be bad after he had attained Knowledge If the mind is drawn towards Him then where is the need for change of environment ? When nothing is possible without His will, then what is the use of planning ? It is better to depend on Him and do as He makes us do Moreover, if you change your environment it will require an effort to get yourself adjusted to the new conditions Therefore let the environment remain as it is In these circumstances go on calling on Him When, through His will, the environment will change, then accept it ”

The question of Karma Yoga was raised by someone, and the Swami said “ ‘You have no right to the results of your work’, the result depends on various factors among

which your effort is only one. The aspirant must try all means for the fulfilment of his immediate duty but should not get disappointed if he is not successful. For though one of the factors may be fulfilled well, yet the work may not turn out successful for want of the other factors. Hence to do one's best and be at peace without being anxious about the result is called Karma Yoga."

Disciple "Does 'Renouncing every undertaking' (Gitâ) mean the renunciation of all work or the performance of work without the idea of Ego?"

Swami "Do the work in hand to the best of your abilities. You have to plan or utilize various means for the fulfilment of this work. But then do not take in fresh work. Do to the best of your abilities that work which has fallen to your share. It is not good to take up work aggressively. If you take up work like that you will find that you cannot perform any of them well. As a result you get worried and your mind is upset."

There was a talk on the refraction of light and the Swami in the course of conversation said "When I was travelling by train through Gujerat I used to see water on either side of the line extending for miles and miles

I wondered whence so much water could come? But afterwards it struck me that it must have been the mirage

“After one realizes God, the world seems to be a mere appearance like the mirage. There is nothing in it that can attract one. Just as one who sees water in a mirage knows full well that there is no water there, so also, though the world of names and forms is there, one knows that it is all *Mâyâ*, an illusion

“First, you have to attain Knowledge. After attaining Knowledge when one returns to this world of diversity, one will see everything as before but will no longer be attached to anything in it. Before realizing the illusion one hopes for water in a mirage, but when one realizes its nature, though one may be seeing the mirage, one no longer expects any water in it. So also, though the world of diversity would still have to be experienced after Knowledge, yet one no longer takes it to be real and so has no longer any attachment for it

“Science has reduced our attachment for many things. Take for instance, the phenomenon of colour. In reality no object has any colour of its own. The solar light is composed of seven different colours. Different

objects absorb different colours of this light and reflect the rest of these spectral colours. Those colours that are reflected give the colour to that object. We are attracted by the beauty of coloured objects, but in reality its beauty depends on the light of the sun. If we remember this, then we can no longer be attracted by them. That which to us is now beautiful may lose its beauty due to change of conditions. As a matter of fact objects do lose their beauty.

“Take again the case of touch. In reality we have but one organ and that is the sense of touch. Sight, hearing, smell, taste—all these depend upon touch or contact. Without contact none of these experiences is possible. The Gîtâ also says, ‘Enjoyments that are of contact born give birth to misery.’ Sound according to time and place is experienced as either sweet or harsh. Sound is carried through air. So here also there is the necessity of touch or contact with the ear.”

II

31st January, 1925

B “Mahârâj, the Master has exhorted us to ‘make the thought tally with speech.’ What does it mean?”

Swami "That you must be sincere, that your inner life should tally with the outer "

B "It is naturally so Whatever we speak we think in our mind "

Swami "But is it not rare? We utter the name of the Lord superficially, too superficially We say, 'I am Thy servant, Thou art my Master, Thou art my Lord, I have renounced all for Thee, I call Thee, Lord, come unto me' But we harbour withal all sorts of evil thoughts in the mind This won't do As you speak, so you must think This means, while you take the name of the Lord think of Him alone Sri Chaitanya used to say, 'That is verily That' That is to say, Name is verily God Himself They are inseparable "

B "Well, Mahârâj, is mere repetition of Name enough in the beginning? We do not get concentration in the initial stage "

Swami "So it is But the Idea corresponding to the Name slowly grows "

D "We have the infinite compassion of the Master and Swamiji upon us You too have showered blessings on us Yet we do not seem to be making any appreciable progress "

Swami "Compassion and blessing undoubtedly are there But can deep-rooted

Samskâras (past impressions) be erased in a day ? They are erased gradually You have renounced home for the sake of God—this itself is an attainment You are surely progressing, and you will do so more and more The Master and Swami have infinite compassion on us Make up your minds now and plunge into Sâdhanâ (spiritual practice) You will then see for yourselves whether you progress or not You must labour hard before you realize the Truth ”

B “What are we to do if any other image than that of the Ishta (Chosen Deity) appears during meditation ?”

Swami “Think then that the Ishta has appeared in that form Thus the form will slowly disappear and the Ishta will reappear ”

M “Should we do so whatever be the form that appears ?”

Swami “No Do this only when the form of a saint appears ”

M “What about an ordinary form ?”

Swami “Drive that resolutely away, and try to reinstall the image of the Ishta with all your might How can you meditate on a shoe-maker’s shop if it suddenly comes and distracts your mind ?”

S “The Master used to say, ‘After making the knowledge of Oneness your own

you can go wherever you like ' What does it mean ?”

Swami “Not ‘Go wherever you like’, but ‘Do whatever you like ’ He meant evidently that after attaining Supreme Knowledge one cannot commit any evil deed How can one who has realized God or attained Knowledge through discrimination, renunciation, love, devotion and purity, do mischief? Such a man necessarily can do no wrong ”

R “Is it possible to attain the knowledge of Oneness through Sâkâra Upâsanâ (worship of Divine Forms) ?”

Swami “Why not? It leads to the knowledge of Oneness in time ”

B “How does it culminate, Mahârâj? Is it that immanence of God is realized in all, or does everything disappear completely ?”

Swami “Both You will understand it as you progress in your Sâdhanâ Practise, and you will feel What’s the use of idle talk? Take to Japa and meditation for some time at least Otherwise, it will be like the utterance of the Punjabee Sâdhus, ‘Tulsi is verily my own nature’ and then enjoying palatable dishes Labour hard and you will know everything in time No use putting such abstruse questions It will lead to nothing Everyone talks but no one does

anything Exertion brings its own reward
Why not practise as per instructions ?”

B “Mahârâj (Swami Brahmananda) has said, ‘Meditate in the heart ’ By ‘heart’ what particular spot is meant ?”

Swami “(Placing his hand on the heart) This is what we usually mean,—the pit of the stomach This is the heart Here one should meditate on the Ishta, seated on a red lotus of eight petals The image of the Guru in a white lotus should be meditated upon in the head above the eye-brows ”

H “Who is an Isvarakotî ?”

Swami “I am not an Isvarakotî that I can properly explain it ”

H “I wish to know what the scriptures say about it ”

Swami “Isvarakotîs come to the world to fulfil some divine missions They are born with perfect Knowledge Such were sages like Nârada, Sukadeva, and others According to Vedânta they are born with the veil of Mâyâ ”

H “What is then the difference between a Jivanmukta and an Isvarakotî ?”

Swami “An ordinary Jiva has to attain everything through tremendous exertion When he reaches the Advaita stage he can no longer return to the ordinary plane of

existence But Isvarakotis are born with Incarnations for the good of the world with Mâyâ's veil outside but perfect Knowledge within They can come down even from the Supreme State But is it possible for ordinary souls?"

H "What is an Incarnation? Is he always conscious of his real nature?"

Suamî "Yes, he is always established in perfect Knowledge But according to his sweet will, he occasionally puts on the veil of Mâyâ "

H "What is then the significance of his spiritual Sâdhanâ?"

Suamî "Putting on the veil of his own choice he feels wants like ordinary mortals This explains his Sâdhanâ etc Do you know what others are like? They are like salt dolls which go to sound the depths of the sea They get dissolved in the sea water and never return "

K "Mahâîâj, is it due to the difference in power or Knowledge?"

Suamî "It is due to the difference in power (Sakti) You know what the Master said about it Three men were taking a walk in a lawn Suddenly they heard sweet sounds, music, etc inside a big enclosure near the lawn Finding no door to go into the enclo-

sure, one of them fetched a ladder and got upon the wall with great difficulty. He saw to his amazement that there was a wonderful performance of dance, music, and the like. Overwhelmed with delight, he at once leapt inside without saying anything about this to his companions. The second man also went up and leapt in like the first. But the third behaved differently. Standing on the wall he also saw what was going on inside. But he considered, 'Should I be so selfish as to enjoy this alone?' No. Let me call others. Let them come and see and enjoy.' So thinking, he descended, called many people together and told them of what he saw inside the walls. Incarnations are like this. It is due to difference in the manifestation of Sakti. It is a great heart alone that can share with others what it acquires after hard struggle. What a renunciation! What a patience! All these show the degrees of manifestation of power."

B "Mahârâj, did Totâpurî reach the Advaita state?"

Swami "(After a pause) Why do you ask such a question? Am I Totâpurî that I should know everything about him? You can easily find out from books which deal with these things."

B "I ask this because you have just said that it is Isvarakotis and Avatâras alone that can return to the normal plane after reaching the Advaita consciousness in the Nirvikalpa Samâdhi "

Swami "Why? What happens with the Jivanmuktas? They also live after attaining Knowledge It is a thing of realization alone Mere questions don't help Be pure Give up evil thoughts and work hard Gradually you will come to understand everything It is impossible to understand these things without intuitive knowledge Practise hard Don't take up spiritual practice in the spirit of forced labour "

R "You have placed heavy work of the Mission upon our shoulders How can one devote oneself completely to Sâdhanâ with such heavy work ?"

Swami (To *R*) "Heavy work, indeed ! Don't you realize that had there been no such work, you would not have done even what little you are doing now? Give up work for a single day if you can Take meals from the Chhatra and practise hard Let me see how far you can proceed You won't be able to do this even for a day After a few days you will be idling away your time Swamiji started these works for the service of

humanity—service with the fullest knowledge that man is a veritable symbol of the Lord. This is a new path—a simple, easy path. But this does not suit you! Why not leave work and see the result? You will fail to do even what little Sâdhanâ you are putting in in the midst of work. Now you are performing selfless work, but if you give it up, you will plunge headlong into selfishness. This will be the result. Don't you see how hard people in the world have to work! Why not enter into the world and see the fun? Many people are at their wit's end simply for serving their parents. Give one a sumptuous meal without any work, because one prefers to practise Sâdhanâ! This won't do. One can certainly again one's goal even in the midst of work. Is there any shade of difference between spiritual practice and the work of the Mission, which is the Master's work? One's longing for spiritual practice loses much of its keenness when work is abandoned. As long as there is obstruction in the path, there is manifestation of power. So long as one lives in one's home, one's desire to become a Sâdhu remains intense. But how long do good intentions prevail after one has become a Sâdhu? (*Keeping silence for a while*) Various causes such as regular study, special

care of parents, marriage affairs, etc offer obstruction, and consequently the power is increased. But when one renounces home, one thinks that the goal has been reached and struggles no more. Take for instance an embankment. Water presses hard to break away as long as there is the embankment. But when it finds a way out it is spread all over. Nothing is left of that force. Being scattered all over, the concentrated force is lost."

K "It may also finally stop without forcing a way out and thus lose all its strength."

Swami "Yes, sometimes it is actually so. But that is rare. Power seeks channels for its manifestation, and gathers force in the midst of obstructions. The Mantra that you have received—why not repeat it regularly? But this none of you will do. Follow your Guru's instructions. How many of you do it? At most one sits for half an hour, that too not in a calm mood and tells the beads as if it is a drudgery and then gets up. This won't help. Who has been following the rules after receiving the Mantra? One nowadays takes a fancy for Sannyâsa. This seems to be your usual way. Sannyâsa means an inward unfoldment. Mere formality cannot go far. Is there anything in formality? One

must make oneself fit for Sannyâsa. This requires an inward growth. How many people work in a true spirit? Working like a day-labourer—what can it pay? It is the spirit—that we are serving Nârâyana in human forms and that the Ishta is in all men—that counts in the long run.”

B “Is it possible to visualize the Ishta and the external objects at the same time?”

Swami “The idea is that the Ishta is visible in so many forms, the Ishta is in everything, as the Master himself saw the Divine Mother in everything.

(After a pause) “Strive, strive, exert yourself.”

K “Mahârâj, we do not see God. How can we love Him without seeing Him? How can we love a Being who is unseen and whose very existence is doubtful?”

Swami “Act according to the instructions of the Guru. If you can strictly follow what the Guru has prescribed for the realization of God, everything will be smooth at last. Meditation comes afterwards. If one fails to meditate, one should go on repeating the Mantra very earnestly. (*To B*) Do you follow what the Guru has enjoined upon you? Who practises even half of what the Guru has instructed? If you

practise, surely you will get your reward. Do you know Purascharana of the Mantra? A Mantra becomes 'conscious' (kinetic) when you repeat it a lac of times at a time. The utterance of the Mantra in a proper spirit even for once purifies the mind. Instantly the mind becomes delighted and blissful."

K "Will it do to repeat it a lac of times a day?"

Swami "That will certainly be very good. Repeat a lac of times or even ten thousand times according to your capacity. Even five thousand times is good if the Mantra is a big one, or even two thousand times if the Mantra is too big a one."

H "Mahârâj, it will take five to six hours to repeat Gâyatri one thousand times."

Swami "All right, if the Mantra is too big, why not repeat at least a thousand times? One should rise at dawn every day and practise. If the Mantra is comparatively small, at first repeat two thousand times, then slowly increase the number. This will do. No one practises, everyone whiles away his time. Strenuous practice is wanted before you can succeed.

"(To B) Labour hard, and success is sure. Everyone finds time for eating and sleeping, but not for spiritual practice."

February, 1925

Swami (To K) "What do you read nowadays?"

K "Adhyâtma Râmâyana "

Swami "Good The Master liked it much Many portions of it he got by heart He had a wonderful memory He was a Srutidhara of the first order,—he could remember anything he heard but once Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) was one of the second order, i.e. he had to read or hear anything twice and then only he would remember it "

B "Mahârâj, how does one get this wonderful power? Is it that their minds are fine or subtle, or is there any other reason?"

Swami "Sure These people have a great control over their mind To whatever thing they apply their mind, it at once gets stuck to it It requires a great power of concentration Whatever they say or hear but once they remember for years

(After a short pause) "Of the 'Six treasures' (*viz* calmness of mind, control over the senses, etc) Sraddhâ or single-minded devotion is one What really counts in the spiritual domain is this unswerving faith—faith in the words of one's Guru, in

the Lord, in the Scriptures 'The Guru has asked me to do such and such thing, if I act up to his instructions I am sure to attain success, it can never be otherwise' Such burning faith in the words of the Guru is what is really required

"What's the difference between a Srutidhara and an ordinary man? A Srutidhara can focus all the powers of his mind to a point, whereas the mental forces of an ordinary man are all scattered and he has not the power to focus them on one thing. The mind of the worldly people is divided over many things. If they get married half the mind goes to the wife, and the greater portion of what remains goes to the children, money, property, etc. The little that is still left is scattered over things of enjoyment. It is almost an impossible task to get it concentrated to a point. The Master would compare the mind to a packet of mustard seeds. 'If the packet is once untied the seeds get scattered in all directions. How difficult it is to collect them again!' Some are perhaps lost for ever' But absolute faith makes the impossible possible

(*After a pause*) "The Reality must not be lost sight of. One must have a tight hold over it—the Truth, the only abiding thing

in this fleeting world The Master once told Hari Mahârâj (Swami Turiyananda), 'You are studying Vedânta What's the essence of it? Brahman alone is true and the Jagat (the world) is false Isn't it? Or anything else? What you require is the essence, throw off everything else' The Master first heard what the great saints of different sects and faiths had to teach, then one day he collected a good number of scriptures, made a garland of them and having put it on danced for a while and then tore the books to pieces and threw them off You get a letter requesting you to send certain things to the writer, when you get the things and send them on, you have no need of the letter The Truth is what we require—the essence of this universe "

June, 1926

Disciple "Mahârâj, will not Kâma (lust) cease?"

Swami "It will, slowly it will pass away Repeat the holy name of the Lord and it will pass away "

October, 1926

Disciple "Mahârâj, at the time of meditation, I can fix my mind neither on the Ishta nor on the image of the Guru "

Suami "It will be of no avail to say that you cannot. You must practise regularly. Incessant efforts are required. There is no other way out. Every day at fixed hours, in the morning and evening, you are to practise diligently. Keep a portrait of your *Ishta* before you and try to meditate."

Disciple "What if I fail to observe strict punctuality? If I cannot sit to meditate at the proper hour?"

Suami "There is no harm, if you cannot be punctual for a day or two. But you should always remember Him and think of Him, while engaged in work. Do it."

Disciple "Well, can the desired object be attained by mere work if *Japa* and meditation are absolutely given up?"

Suami "It can be attained provided one works in the proper spirit. But ordinarily it is not possible. Spiritual practices are essential."

Disciple "How many times shall I repeat the holy name?"

Suami "As many times as you can."

Disciple "Frequently evil thoughts arise in the mind. How can one be saved from them?"

Suami "One should drive them away resolutely. You have read in the *Gîtâ*, 'The

Self is attained by continual practice and renunciation ' There is no other way Surrender yourself to the Lord Make Him your own, and evil thoughts will pass away It is absolutely necessary to make Him your own "

Disciple "Frequently even at the time of meditation Kâma (lust) makes its appearance vigorously "

Swami "Never mind It comes to all Surrender yourself to the Lord and drive it away But carefully abstain from such food as irritates the stomach and is not easily digested "

Disciple "What is the meaning of our Mantra?"

Swami "May God who is the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the creation, remove my sorrows " This is the significance of all Mantras Have faith in Him, otherwise even thousands of explanations will be of no use Pray to Him and love Him "

Disciple "Do Prânâyâma, Asana, etc help to remove the impressions of the mind?"

Swami "Nothing particular can be achieved through them One may derive

some benefit The more you will love God, the more will the mind come under your control ”

Disciple “Mahârâj, I like to meditate on the Guru The thought about the Ishta does not come to my mind usually So I meditate on the Guru Will it not do ?”

Swami “No Why should you make things so easy ? After meditating on the Guru, meditate on the Ishta as well But if you feel a special yearning for the Guru you may devote a greater length of time to him If you cannot meditate on the Ishta just think that He is That also will give you peace ”

Disciple I have heard that the two are essentially one Why then will it not be sufficient to meditate on one ?”

Swami “No When you will attain that state, when you will realize the oneness of the two, then alone you can think in that way Why should you make things too easy ?”

Disciple “Is Japa to be practised with meditation or after meditation ?”

Swami “It is to be practised with meditation As you progress you will understand how with the intensity of meditation Japa stops automatically ”

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